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The Books of FAERIE™

AUBERON'S TALE

no. 1
AUG 98
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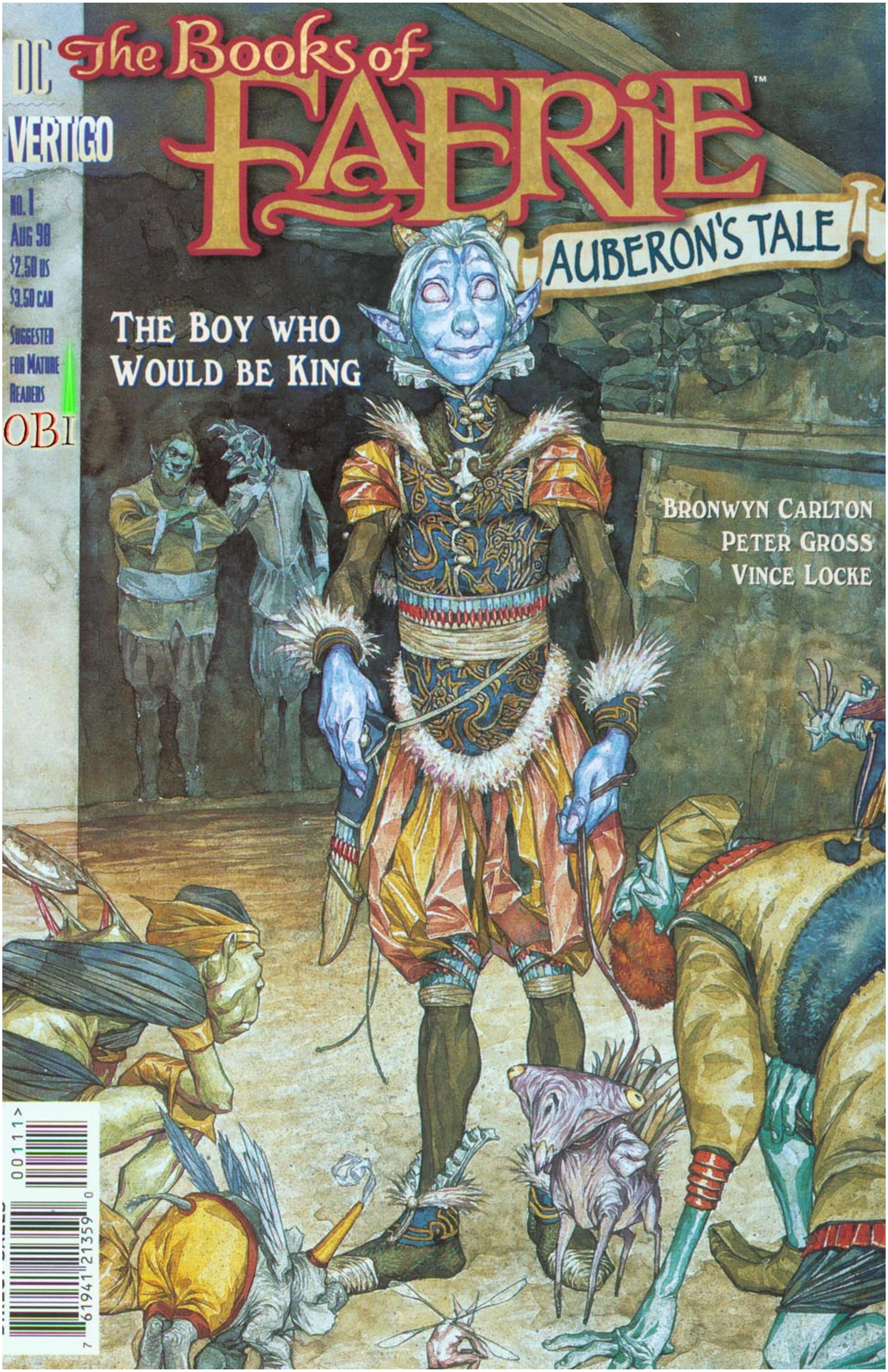
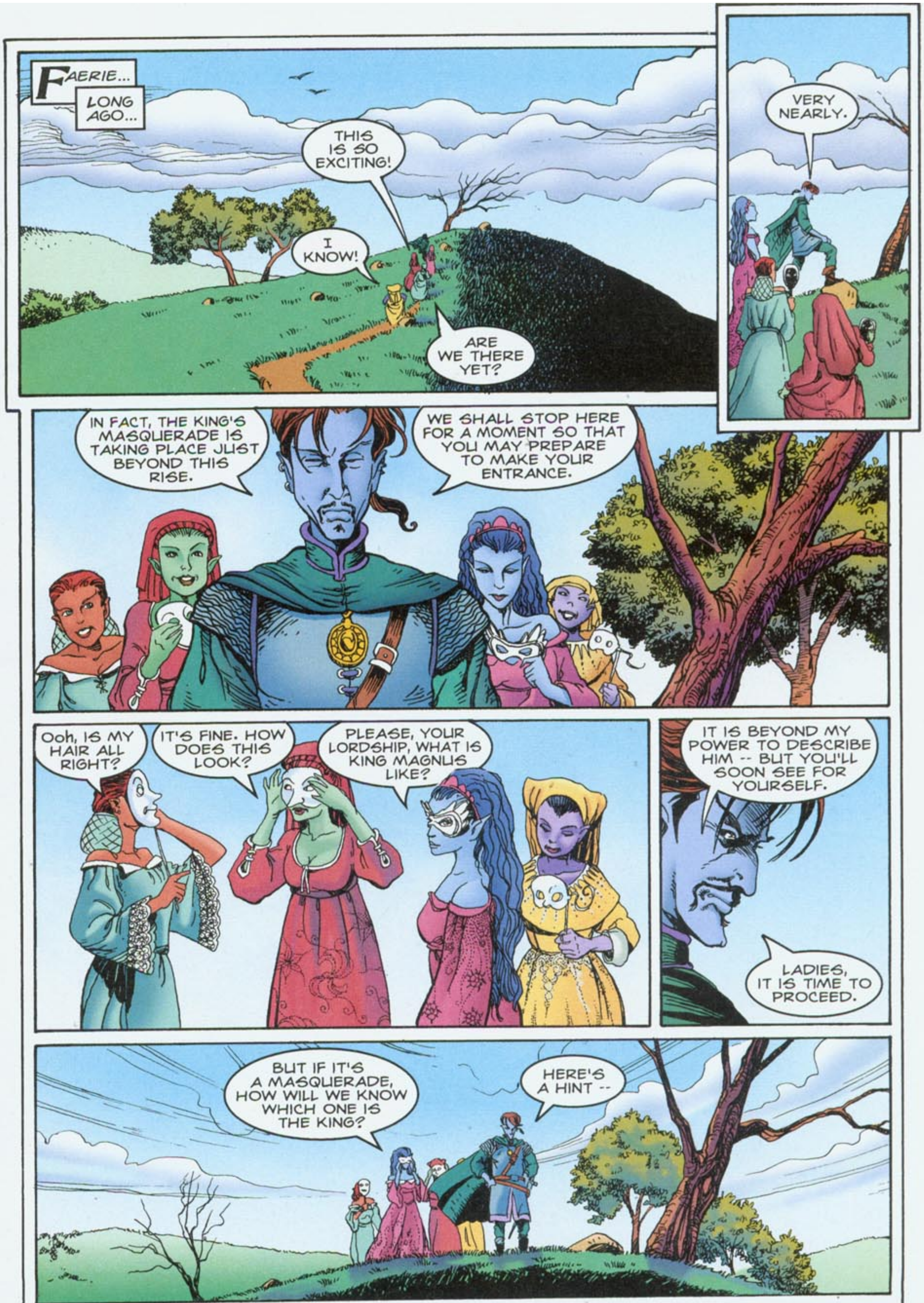
SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

OBI

THE BOY WHO WOULD BE KING

BRONWYN CARLTON
PETER GROSS
VINCE LOCKE




FAERIE...
LONG AGO...
THIS IS SO EXCITING!
I KNOW!
ARE WE THERE YET?
VERY NEARLY.
IN FACT, THE KING'S MASQUERADE IS TAKING PLACE JUST BEYOND THIS RISE.
WE SHALL STOP HERE FOR A MOMENT SO THAT YOU MAY PREPARE TO MAKE YOUR ENTRANCE.
Ooh, IS MY HAIR ALL RIGHT?
IT'S FINE. HOW DOES THIS LOOK?
PLEASE, YOUR LORDSHIP, WHAT IS KING MAGNUS LIKE?
IT IS BEYOND MY POWER TO DESCRIBE HIM -- BUT YOU'LL SOON SEE FOR YOURSELF.
LADIES, IT IS TIME TO PROCEED.
BUT IF IT'S A MASQUERADE, HOW WILL WE KNOW WHICH ONE IS THE KING?
HERE'S A HINT --

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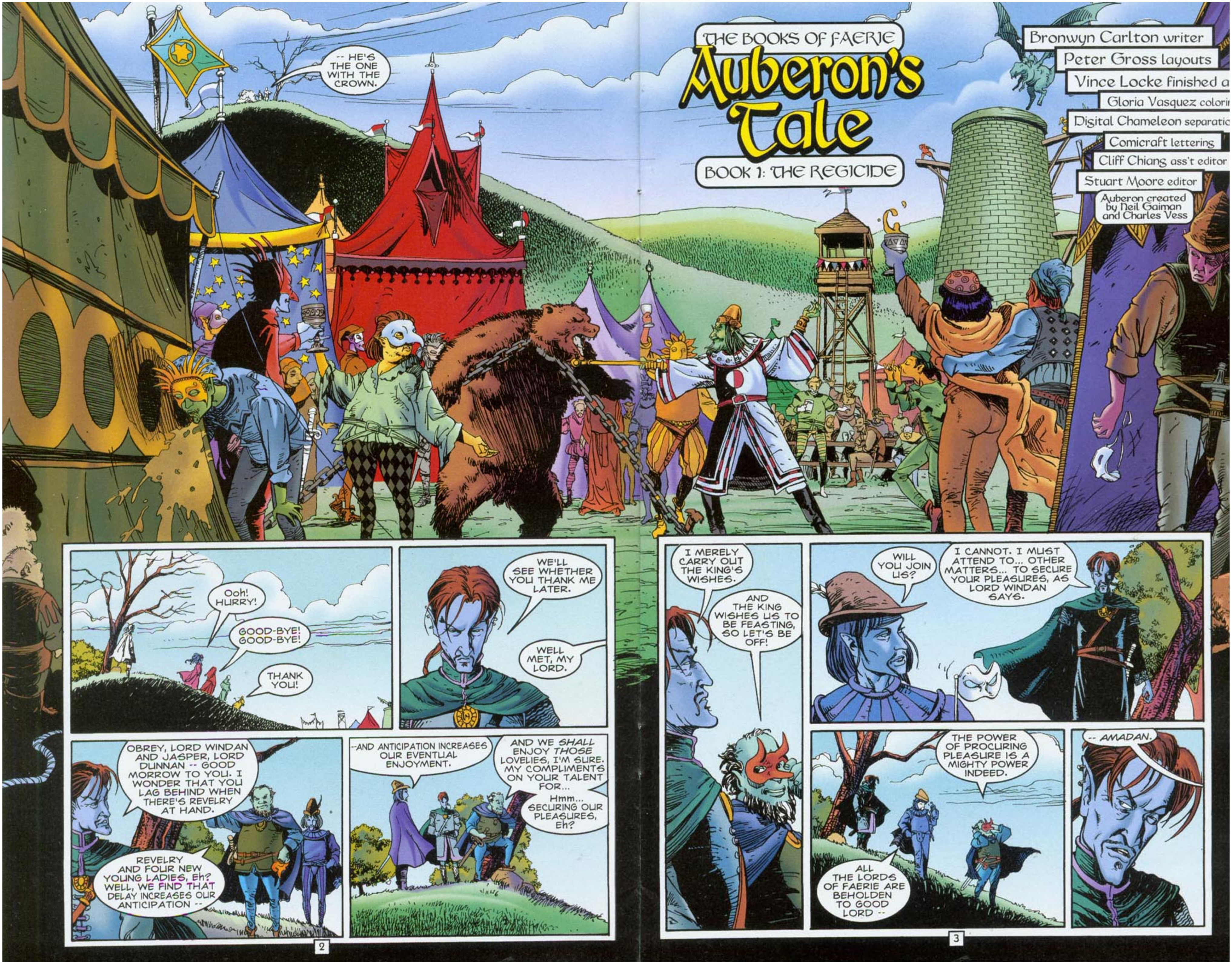

THE BOOKS OF FAERIE

Auberon's Tale

BOOK 1: THE REGICIDE

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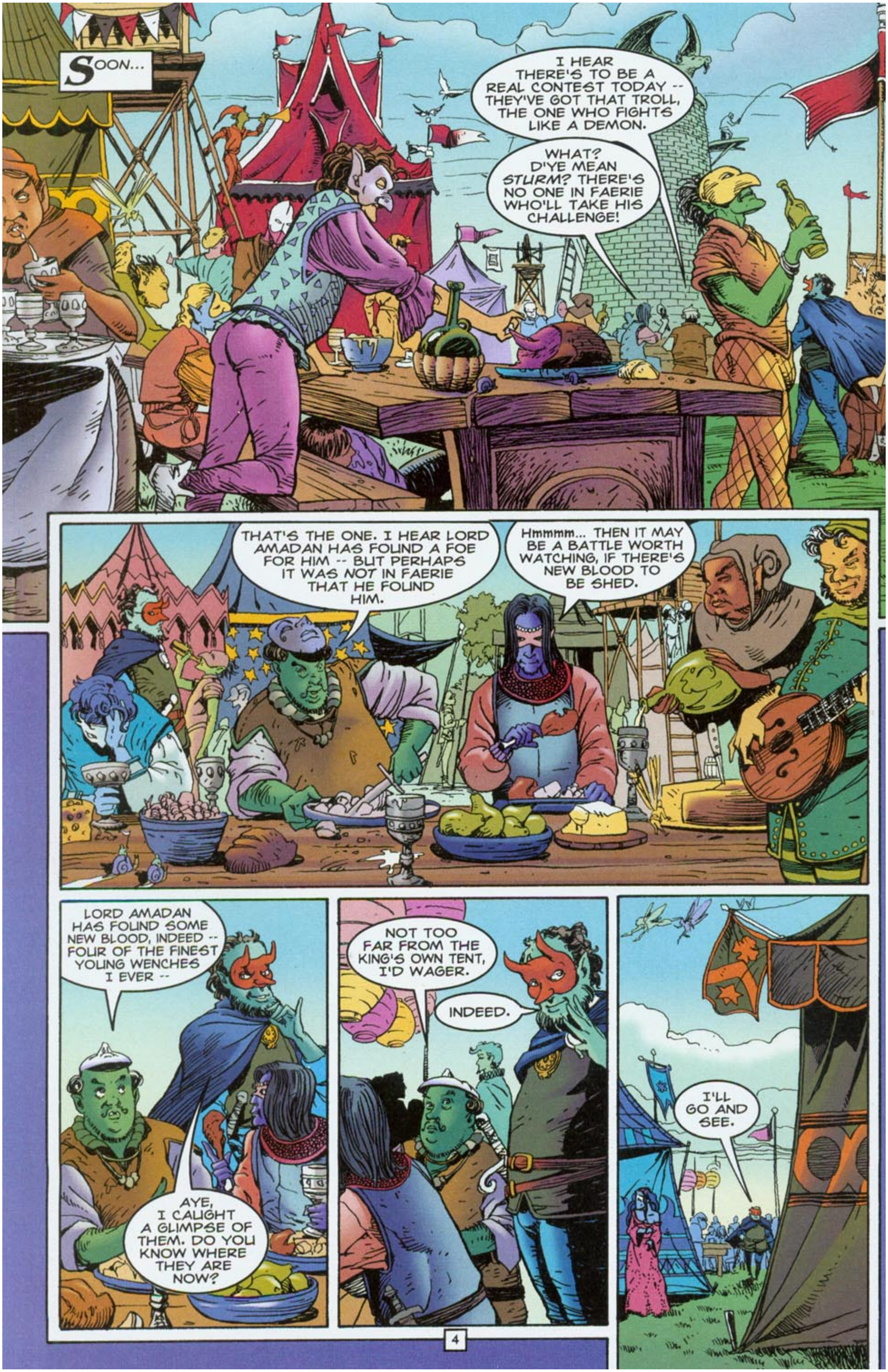
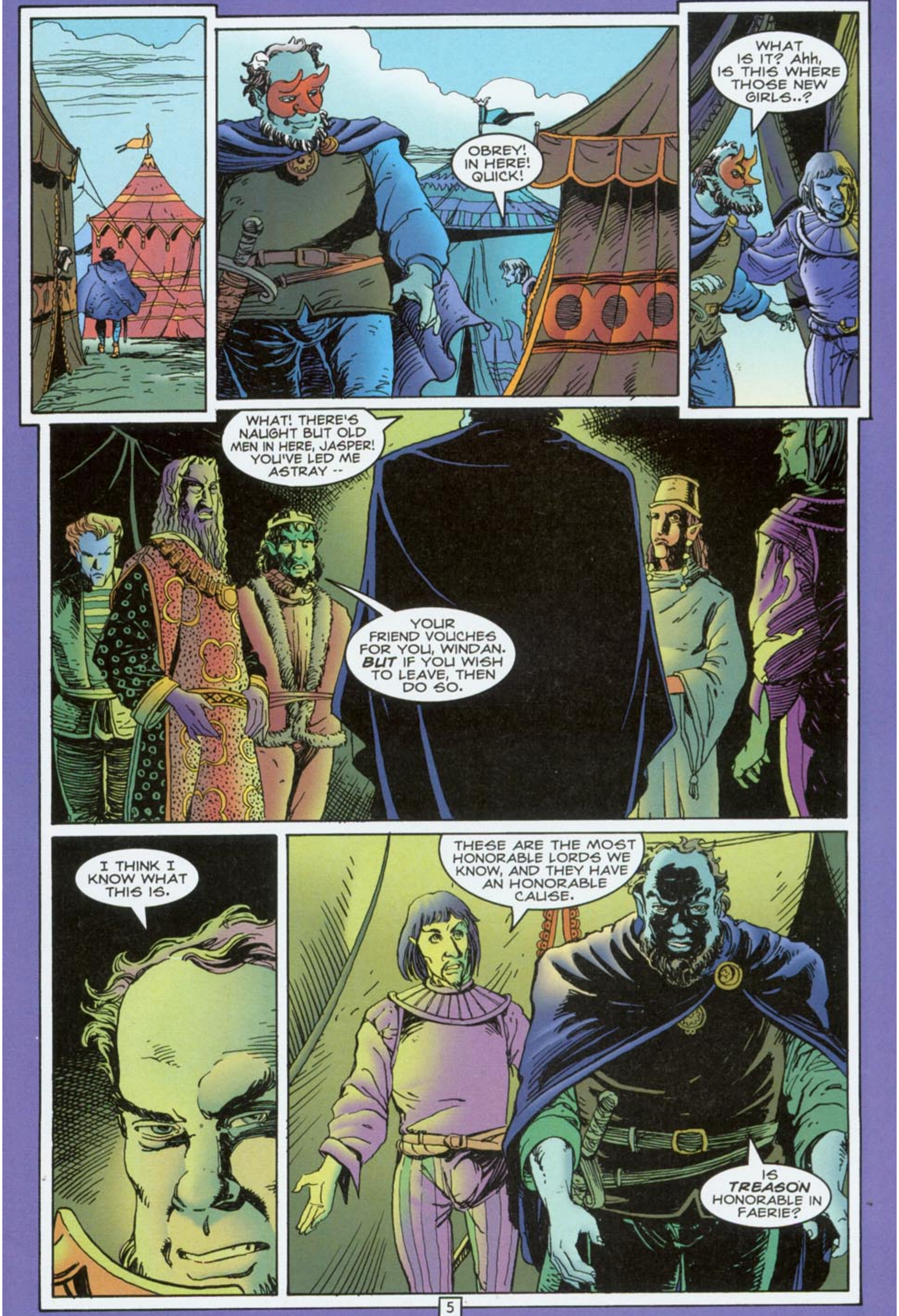
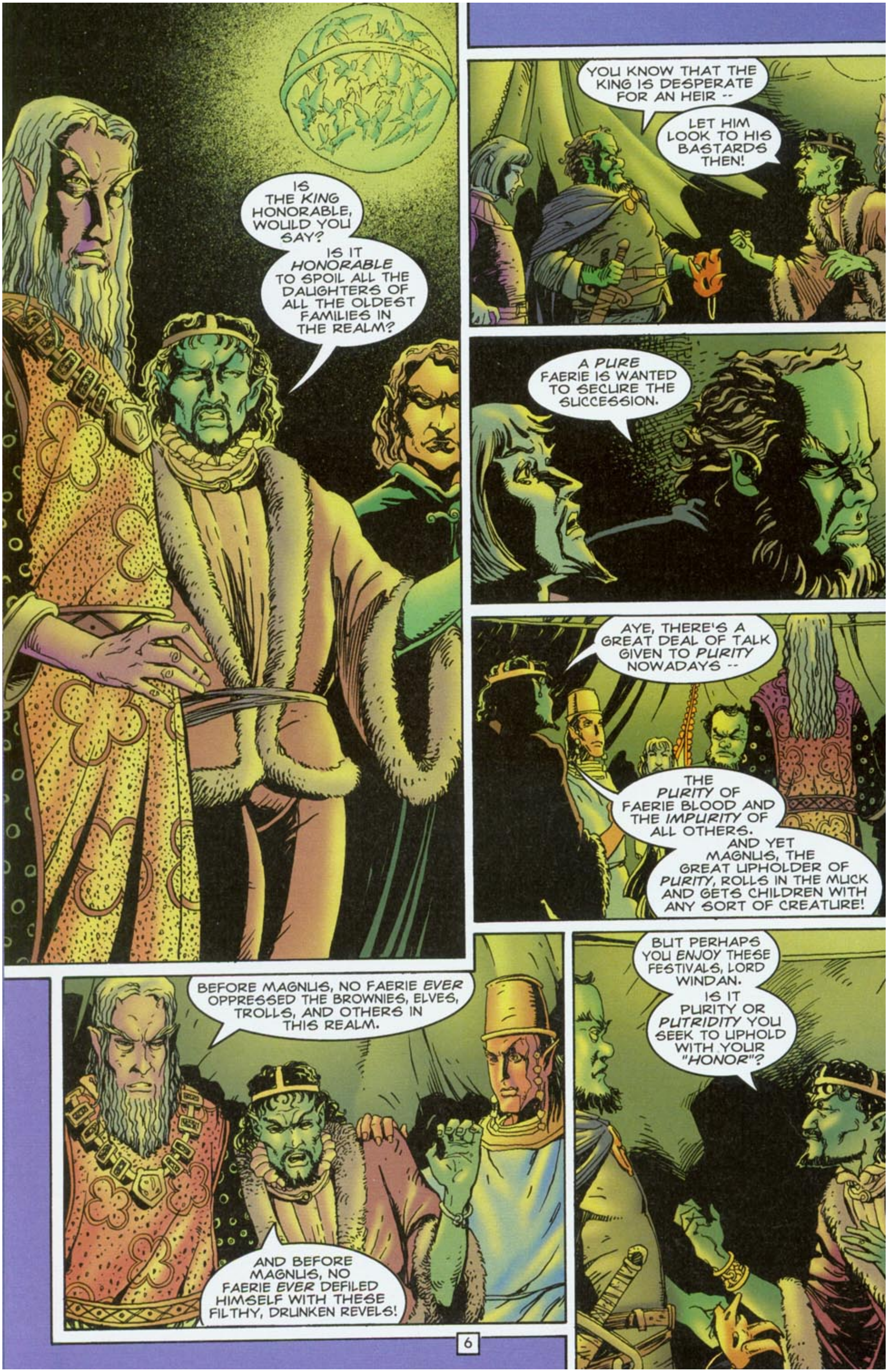
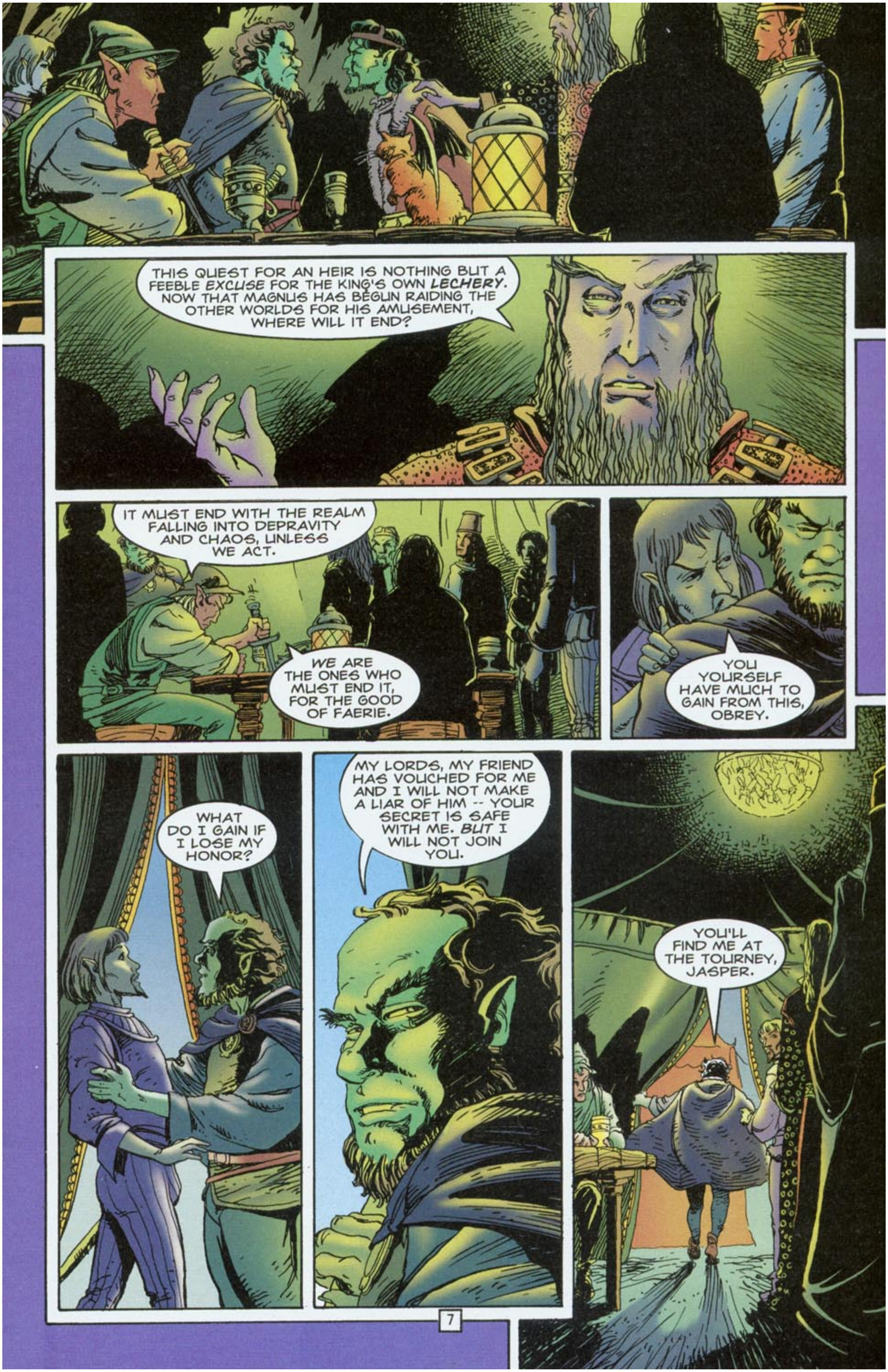
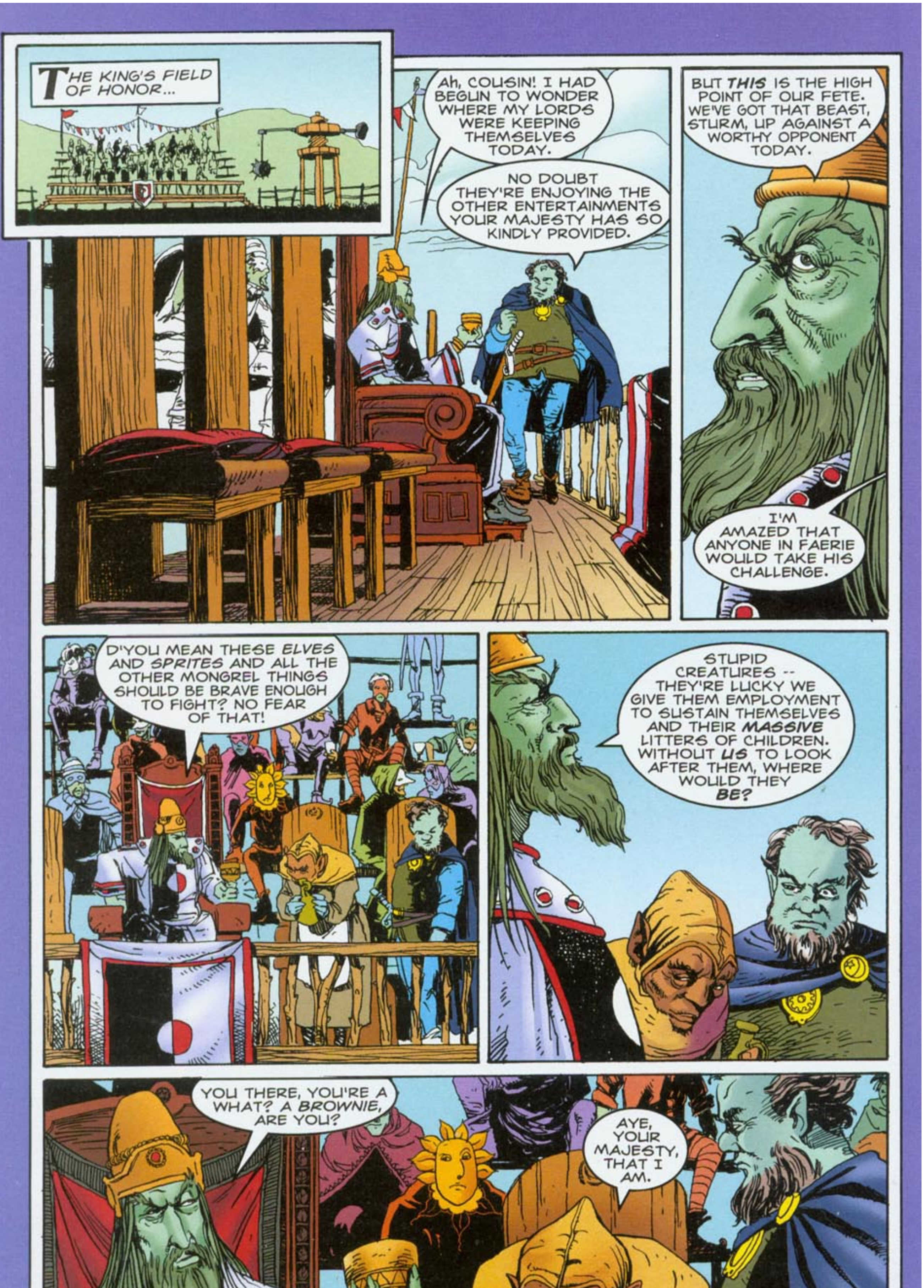
-- HE'S THE ONE WITH THE CROWN.
Ooh! HURRY!
GOOD-BYE! GOOD-BYE!
THANK YOU!
WE'LL SEE WHETHER YOU THANK ME LATER.
WELL MET, MY LORD.
OBREY, LORD WINDAN AND JASPER, LORD DUNNAN -- GOOD MORROW TO YOU. I WONDER THAT YOU LAG BEHIND WHEN THERE'S REVELRY AT HAND.
REVELRY AND FOUR NEW YOUNG LADIES, Eh? WELL, WE FIND THAT DELAY INCREASES OUR ANTICIPATION --
--AND ANTICIPATION INCREASES OUR EVENTUAL ENJOYMENT.
AND WE SHALL ENJOY THOSE LOVELIES, I'M SURE. MY COMPLIMENTS ON YOUR TALENT FOR...
Hmm... SECURING OUR PLEASURES, Eh?
I MERELY CARRY OUT THE KING'S WISHES.
AND THE KING WISHES US TO BE FEASTING, SO LET'S BE OFF!
WILL YOU JOIN US?
I CANNOT. I MUST ATTEND TO... OTHER MATTERS... TO SECURE YOUR PLEASURES, AS LORD WINDAN SAYS.
ALL THE LORDS OF FAERIE ARE BEHOLDEN TO GOOD LORD --
THE POWER OF PROCURING PLEASURE IS A MIGHTY POWER INDEED.
-- AMADAN.

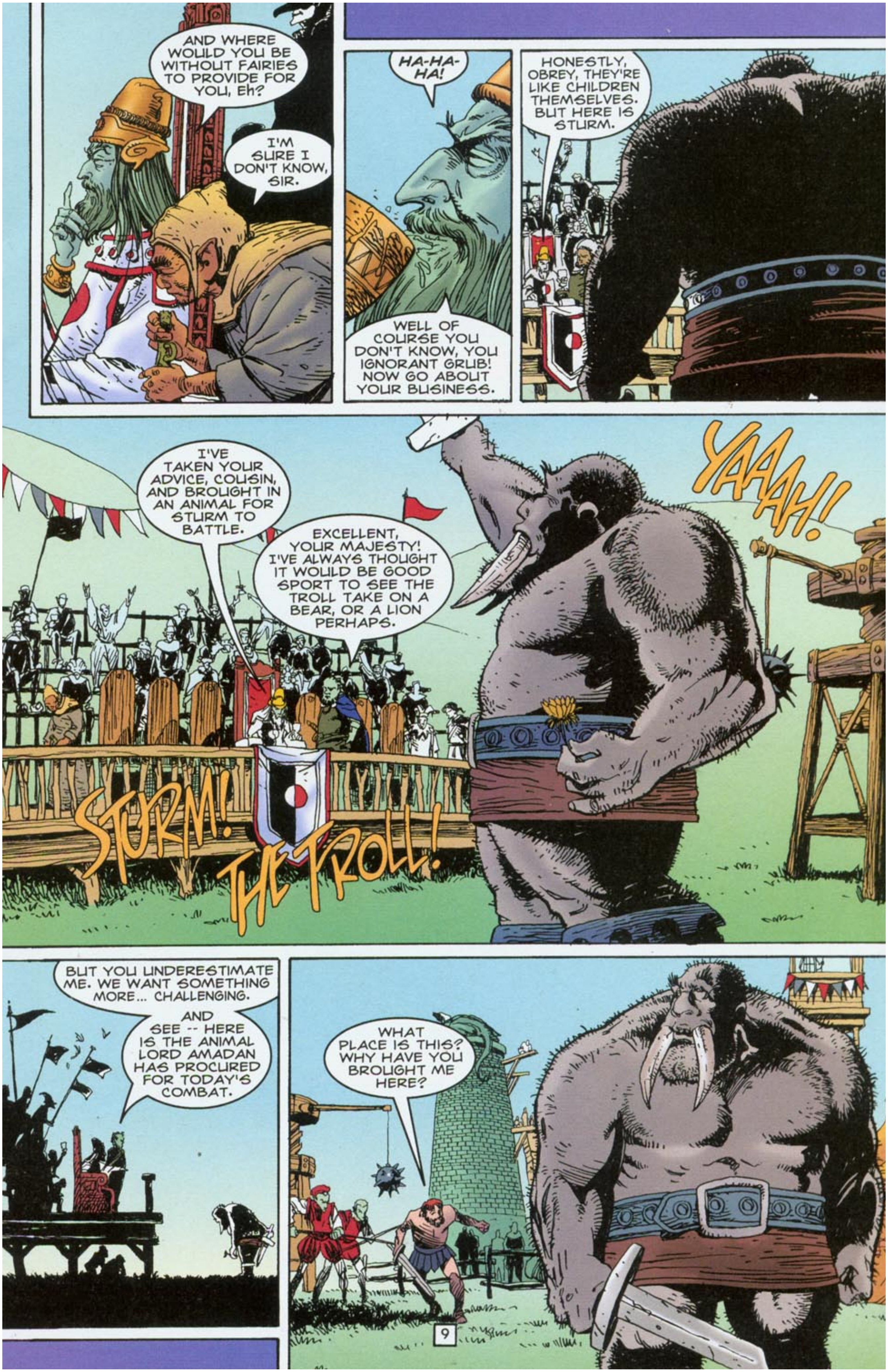

SOON...
I HEAR THERE'S TO BE A REAL CONTEST TODAY -- THEY'VE GOT THAT TROLL, THE ONE WHO FIGHTS LIKE A DEMON.
WHAT? D'YE MEAN *STURM*? THERE'S NO ONE IN FAERIE WHO'LL TAKE HIS CHALLENGE!
THAT'S THE ONE. I HEAR LORD AMADAN HAS FOUND A FOE FOR HIM -- BUT PERHAPS IT WAS *NOT* IN FAERIE THAT HE FOUND HIM.
Hmmmm... THEN IT MAY BE A BATTLE WORTH WATCHING, IF THERE'S NEW BLOOD TO BE SHED.
LORD AMADAN HAS FOUND SOME NEW BLOOD, INDEED -- FOUR OF THE FINEST YOUNG WENCHES I EVER --
AYE, I CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF THEM. DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE NOW?
NOT TOO FAR FROM THE KING'S OWN TENT, I'D WAGER.
INDEED.
I'LL GO AND SEE.

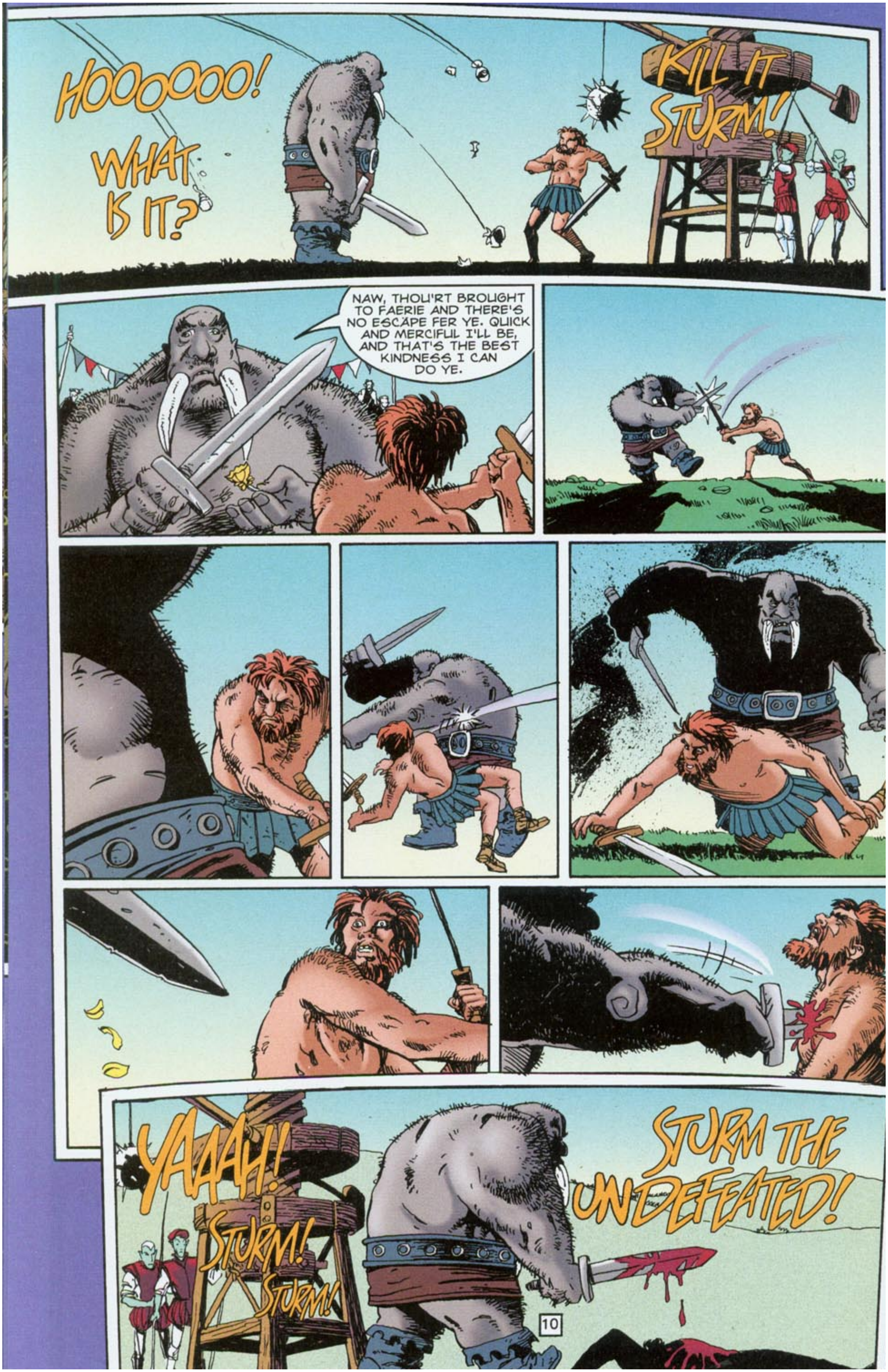

OBREY! IN HERE! QUICK!
WHAT IS IT? Ahh, IS THIS WHERE THOSE NEW GIRLS..?
WHAT! THERE'S NAUGHT BUT OLD MEN IN HERE, JASPER! YOU'VE LED ME ASTRAY --
YOUR FRIEND VOUCHES FOR YOU, WINDAN. BUT IF YOU WISH TO LEAVE, THEN DO SO.
I THINK I KNOW WHAT THIS IS.
THESE ARE THE MOST HONORABLE LORDS WE KNOW, AND THEY HAVE AN HONORABLE CAUSE.
IS TREASON HONORABLE IN FAERIE?

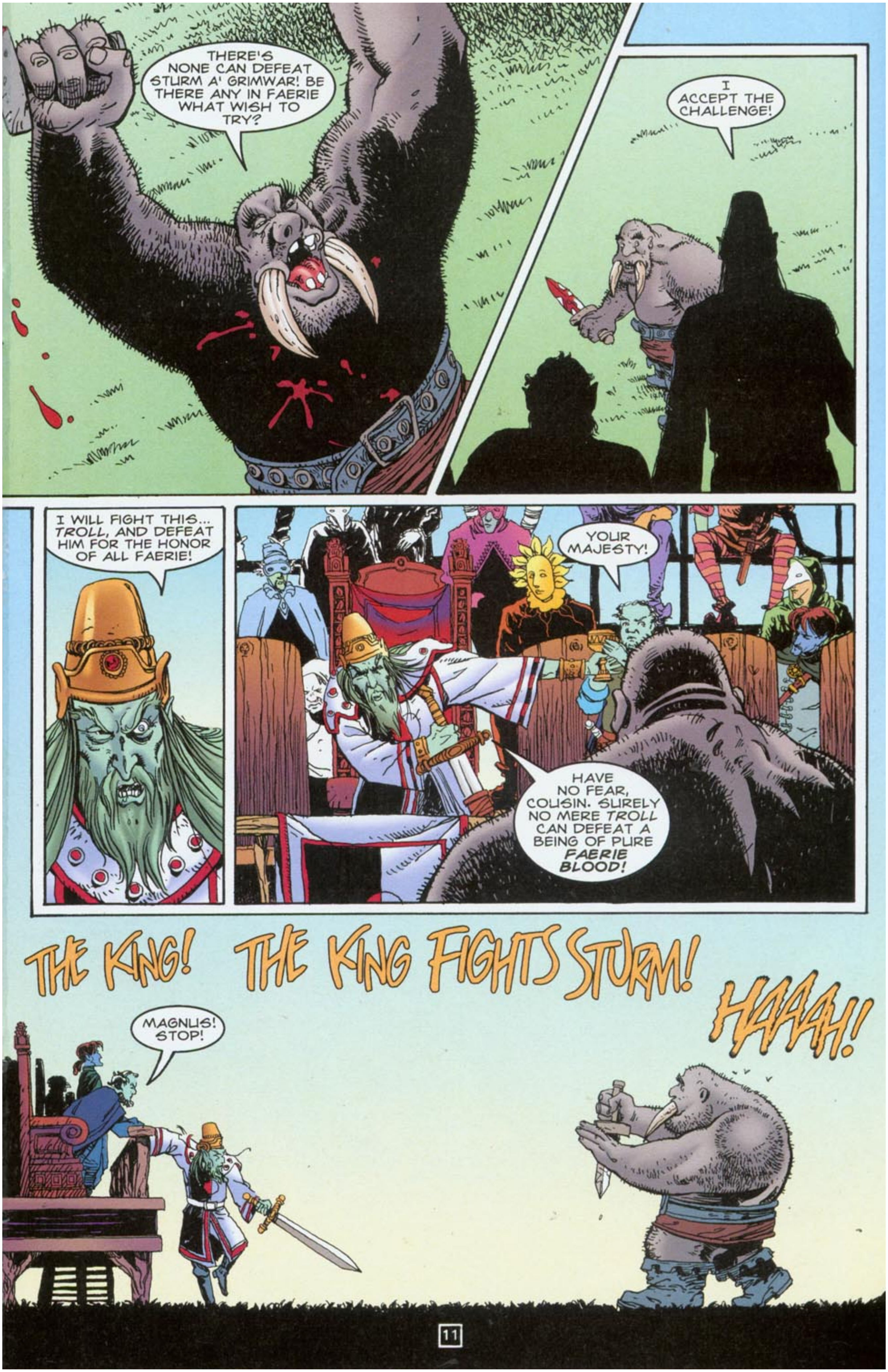

IS THE *KING* HONORABLE, WOULD YOU SAY?
IS IT *HONORABLE* TO SPOIL ALL THE DAUGHTERS OF ALL THE OLDEST FAMILIES IN THE REALM?
YOU KNOW THAT THE KING IS DESPERATE FOR AN HEIR --
LET HIM LOOK TO HIS BASTARDS THEN!
A *PURE* FAERIE IS WANTED TO SECURE THE SUCCESSION.
AYE, THERE'S A GREAT DEAL OF TALK GIVEN TO *PURITY* NOWADAYS --
THE *PURITY* OF FAERIE BLOOD AND THE *IMPURITY* OF ALL OTHERS.
AND YET MAGNUS, THE GREAT UPHOLDER OF *PURITY*, ROLLS IN THE MUCK AND GETS CHILDREN WITH ANY SORT OF CREATURE!
BEFORE MAGNUS, NO FAERIE *EVER* OPPRESSED THE BROWNIES, ELVES, TROLLS, AND OTHERS IN THIS REALM.
AND BEFORE MAGNUS, NO FAERIE *EVER* DEFILED HIMSELF WITH THESE FILTHY, DRUNKEN REVELS!
BUT PERHAPS YOU *ENJOY* THESE FESTIVALS, LORD WINDAN.
IS IT PURITY OR *PUTRIDITY* YOU SEEK TO UPHOLD WITH YOUR "*HONOR*"?

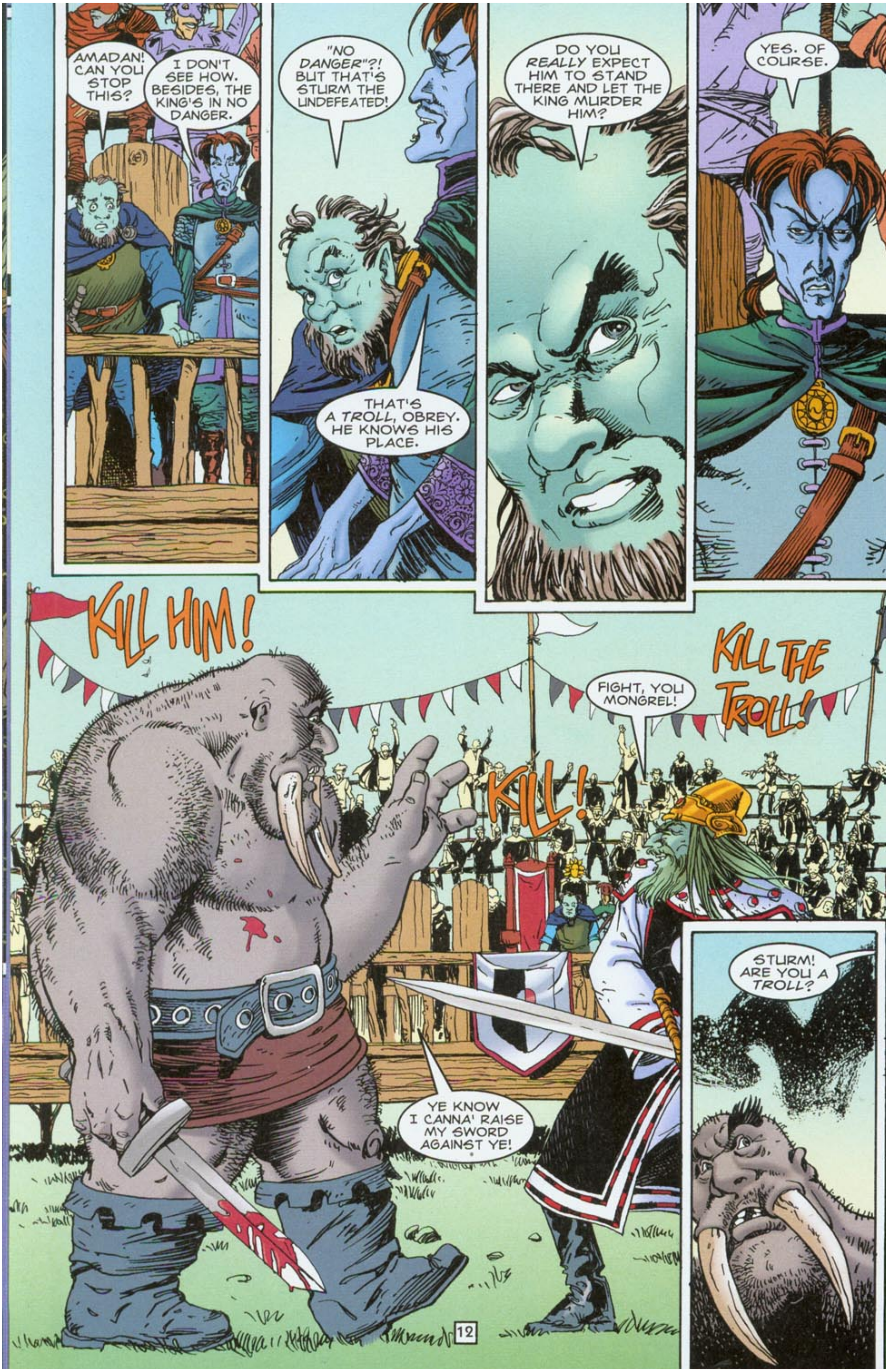

THIS QUEST FOR AN HEIR IS NOTHING BUT A FEEBLE *EXCUSE* FOR THE KING'S OWN *LECHERY*. NOW THAT MAGNUS HAS BEGUN RAIDING THE OTHER WORLDS FOR HIS AMUSEMENT, WHERE WILL IT END?
IT MUST END WITH THE REALM FALLING INTO DEPRAVITY AND CHAOS, UNLESS WE ACT.
WE ARE THE ONES WHO MUST END IT, FOR THE GOOD OF FAERIE.
YOU YOURSELF HAVE MUCH TO GAIN FROM THIS, OBREY.
WHAT DO I GAIN IF I LOSE MY HONOR?
MY LORDS, MY FRIEND HAS VOUCHED FOR ME AND I WILL NOT MAKE A LIAR OF HIM -- YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME. *BUT* I WILL NOT JOIN YOU.
YOU'LL FIND ME AT THE TOURNEY, JASPER.

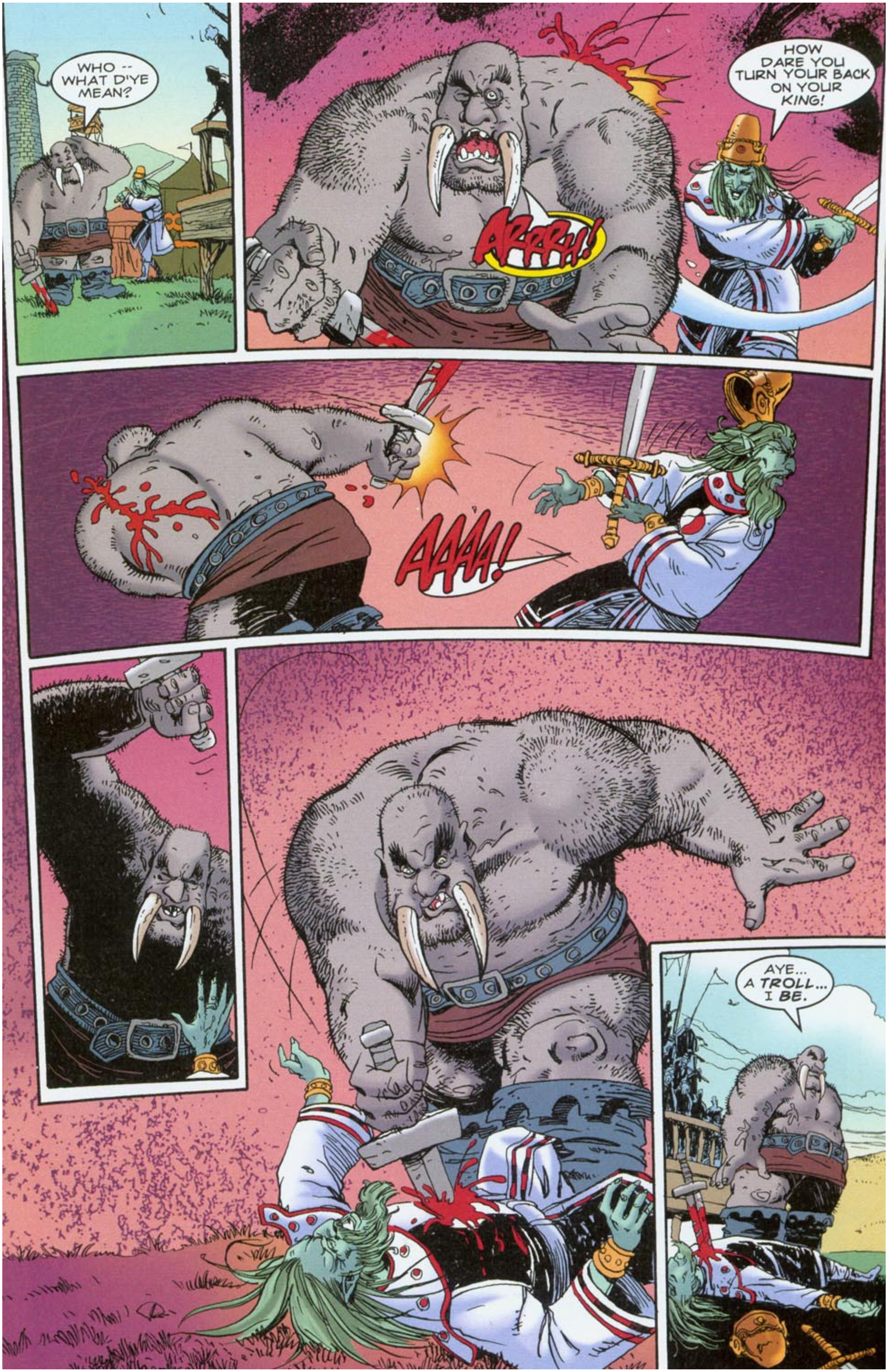

THE KING'S FIELD OF HONOR...
Ah, COUSIN! I HAD BEGUN TO WONDER WHERE MY LORDS WERE KEEPING THEMSELVES TODAY.
NO DOUBT THEY'RE ENJOYING THE OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS YOUR MAJESTY HAS SO KINDLY PROVIDED.
BUT *THIS* IS THE HIGH POINT OF OUR FETE. WE'VE GOT THAT BEAST, STURM, UP AGAINST A WORTHY OPPONENT TODAY.
I'M AMAZED THAT ANYONE IN FAERIE WOULD TAKE HIS CHALLENGE.
D'YOU MEAN THESE *ELVES* AND *SPRITES* AND ALL THE OTHER MONGREL THINGS SHOULD BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO FIGHT? NO FEAR OF THAT!
STUPID CREATURES -- THEY'RE LUCKY WE GIVE THEM EMPLOYMENT TO SUSTAIN THEMSELVES AND THEIR ***MASSIVE*** LITTERS OF CHILDREN. WITHOUT ***US*** TO LOOK AFTER THEM, WHERE WOULD THEY ***BE?***
YOU THERE, YOU'RE A WHAT? A *BROWNIE*, ARE YOU?
AYE, YOUR MAJESTY, THAT I AM.

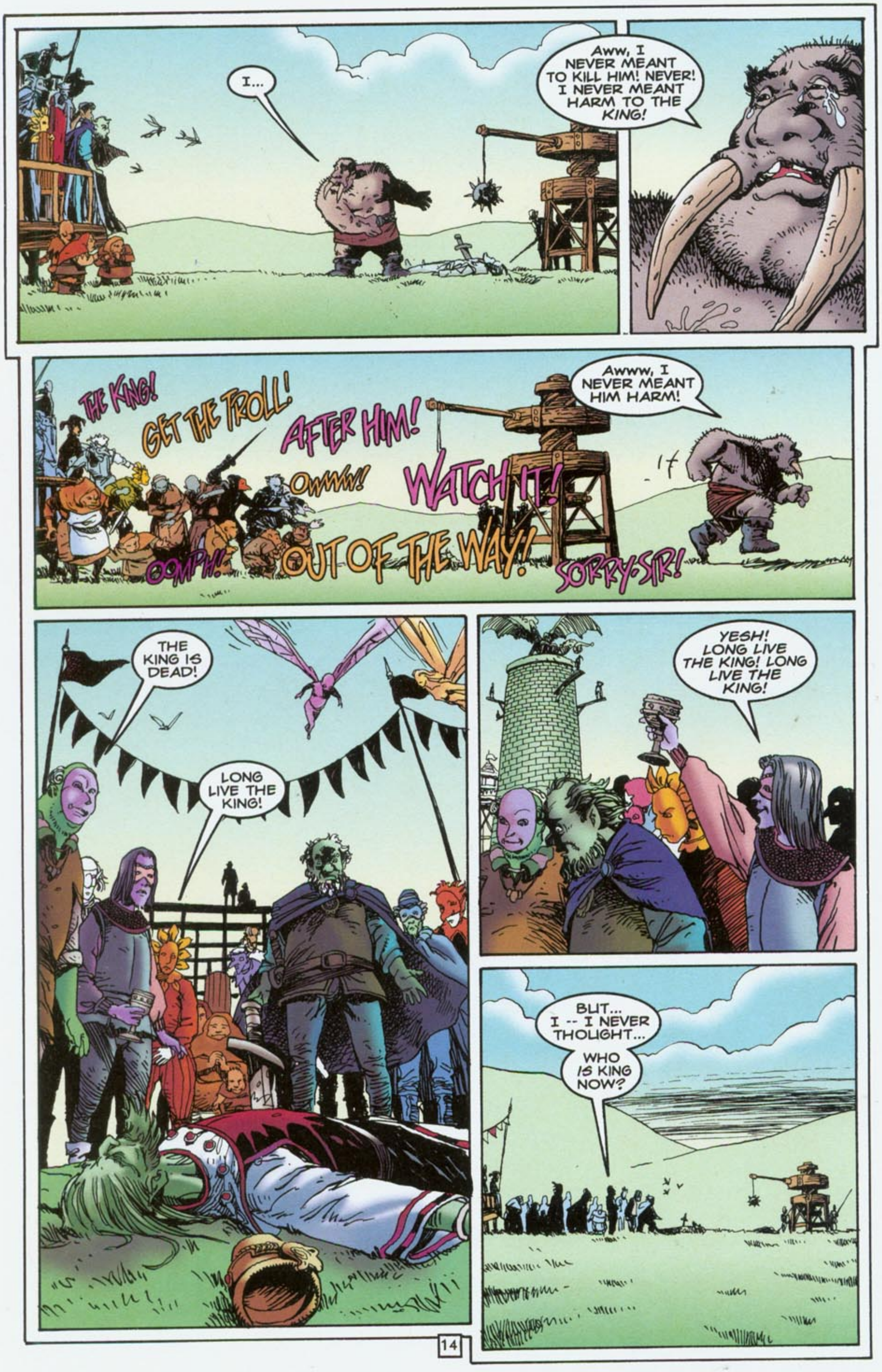

AND WHERE WOULD YOU BE WITHOUT FAIRIES TO PROVIDE FOR YOU, EH?
I'M SURE I DON'T KNOW, SIR.
HA-HA-HA!
WELL OF COURSE YOU DON'T KNOW, YOU IGNORANT GRUB! NOW GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS.
HONESTLY, OBREY, THEY'RE LIKE CHILDREN THEMSELVES. BUT HERE IS STURM.
I'VE TAKEN YOUR ADVICE, COUSIN, AND BROUGHT IN AN ANIMAL FOR STURM TO BATTLE.
EXCELLENT, YOUR MAJESTY! I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD SPORT TO SEE THE TROLL TAKE ON A BEAR, OR A LION PERHAPS.
YAAAAH!
STURM! THE TROLL!
BUT YOU UNDERESTIMATE ME. WE WANT SOMETHING MORE... CHALLENGING.
AND SEE -- HERE IS THE ANIMAL LORD AMADAN HAS PROCURED FOR TODAY'S COMBAT.
WHAT PLACE IS THIS? WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?

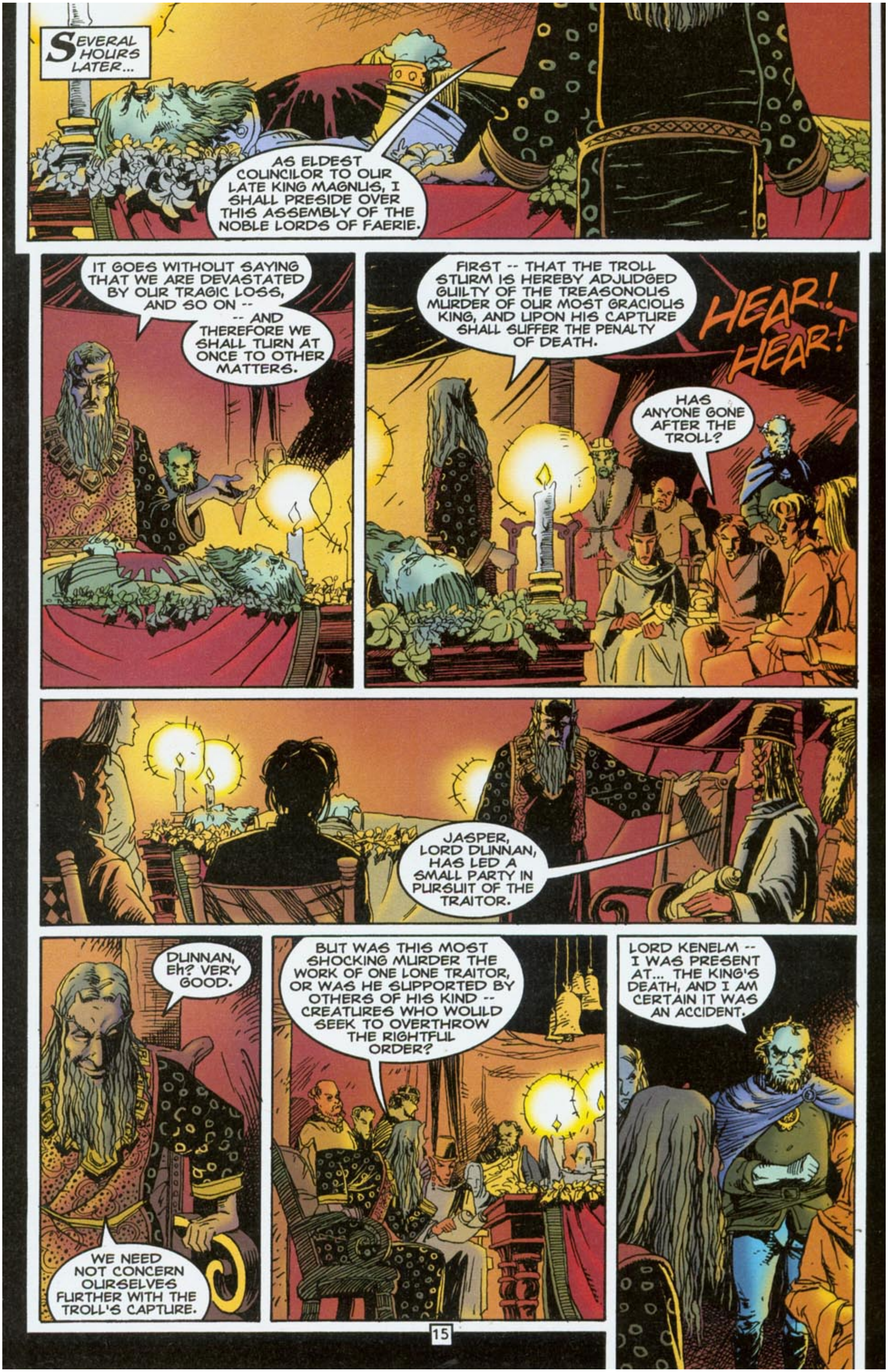

HOOOOOO!
WHAT IS IT?
KILL IT STURM!
NAW, THOU'RT BROUGHT TO FAERIE AND THERE'S NO ESCAPE FER YE. QUICK AND MERCIFUL I'LL BE, AND THAT'S THE BEST KINDNESS I CAN DO YE.
YAAAH!
STURM!
STURM!
STURM THE UNDEFEATED!

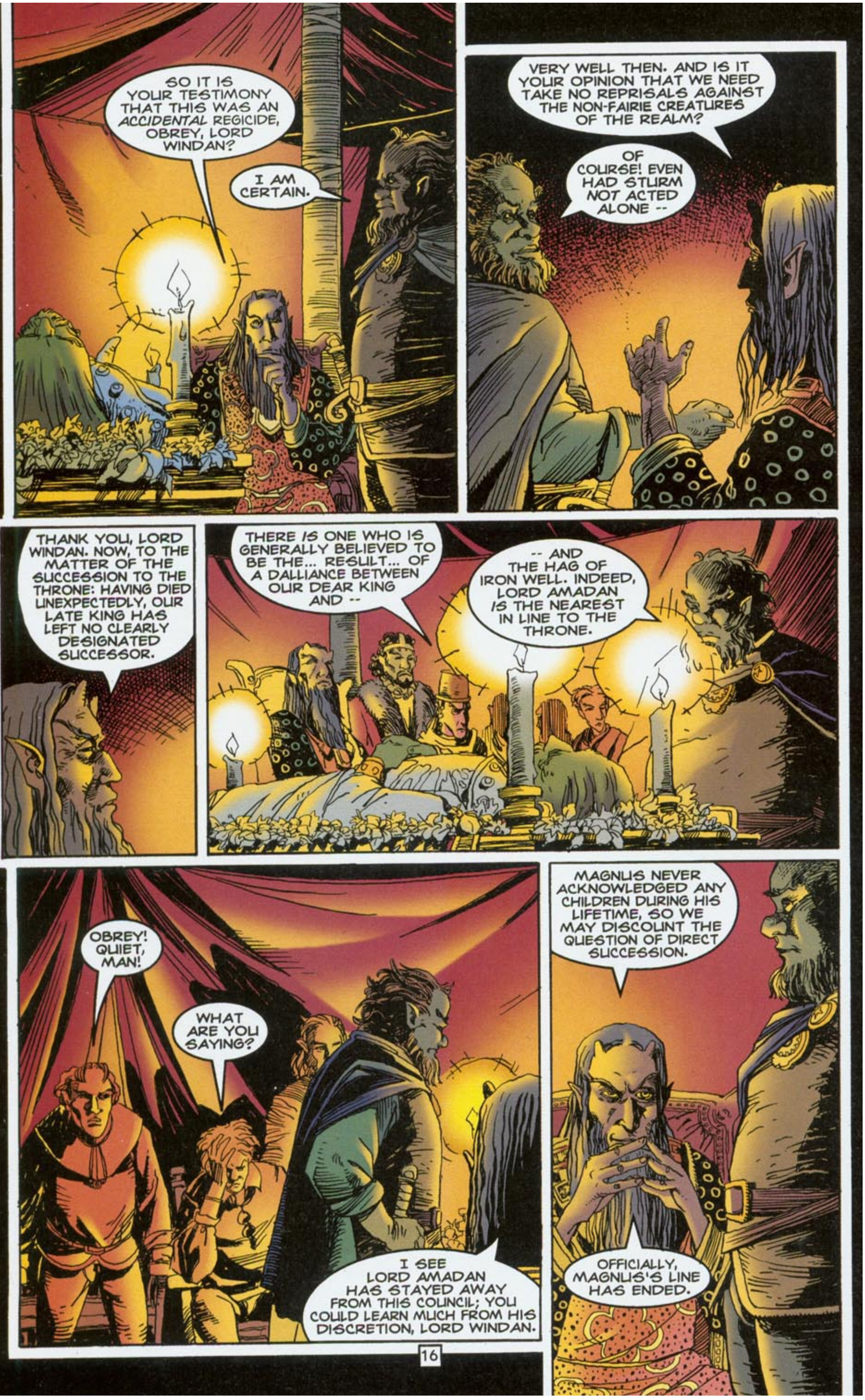

THERE'S NONE CAN DEFEAT STURM A' GRIMWAR! BE THERE ANY IN FAERIE WHAT WISH TO TRY?
I ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE!
I WILL FIGHT THIS... *TROLL*, AND DEFEAT HIM FOR THE HONOR OF ALL FAERIE!
YOUR MAJESTY!
HAVE NO FEAR, COUSIN. SURELY NO MERE *TROLL* CAN DEFEAT A BEING OF PURE ***FAERIE BLOOD!***
THE KING! THE KING FIGHTS STURM!
HAAAH!
MAGNUS! STOP!

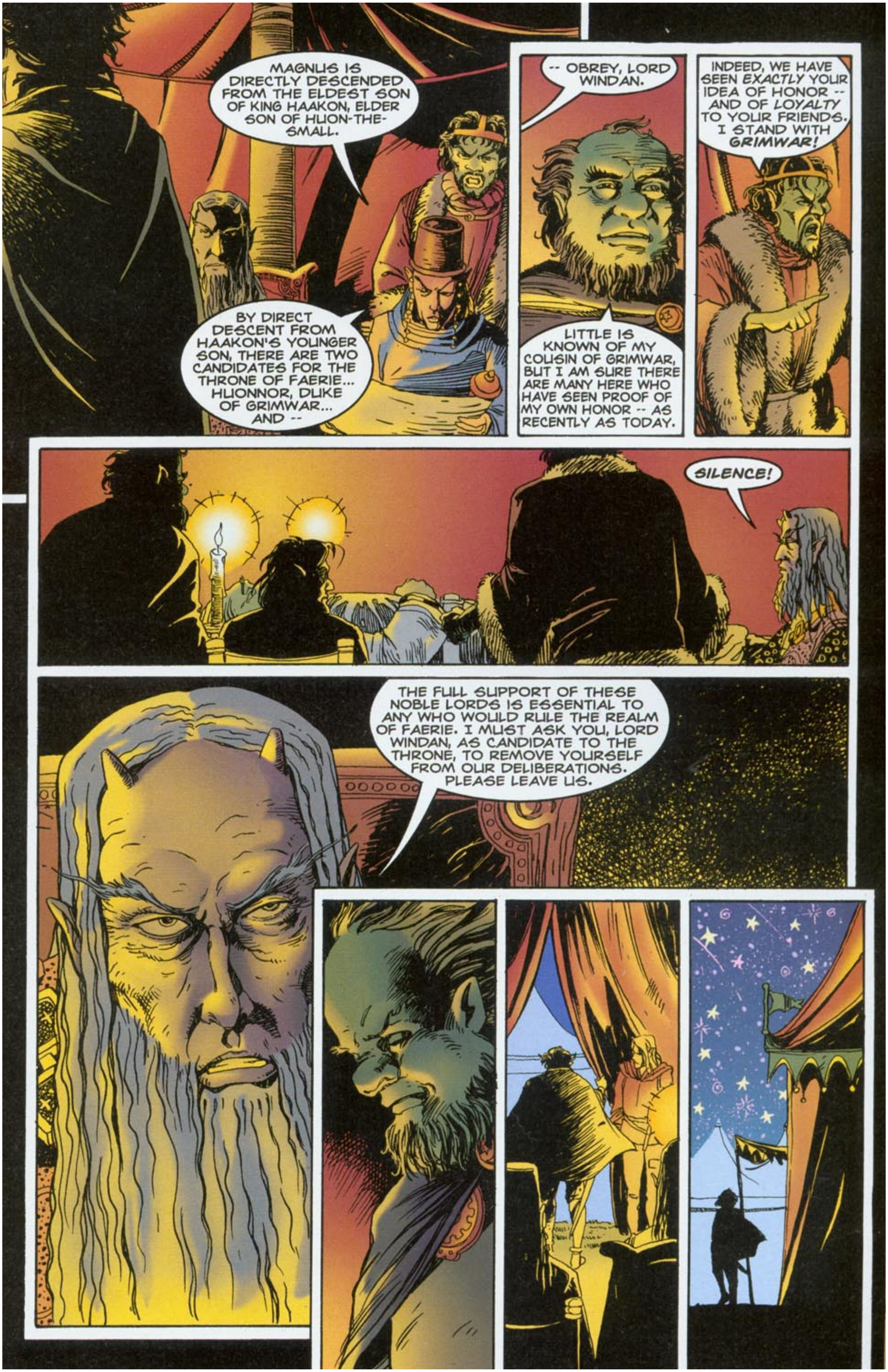

AMADAN! CAN YOU STOP THIS?
I DON'T SEE HOW. BESIDES, THE KING'S IN NO DANGER.
"NO *DANGER*"?! BUT THAT'S STURM THE UNDEFEATED!
THAT'S A *TROLL*, OBREY. HE KNOWS HIS PLACE.
DO YOU *REALLY* EXPECT HIM TO STAND THERE AND LET THE KING MURDER HIM?
YES. OF COURSE.
KILL HIM!
KILL THE TROLL!
FIGHT, YOU MONGREL!
KILL!
YE KNOW I CANNA' RAISE MY SWORD AGAINST YE!
STURM! ARE YOU A *TROLL*?

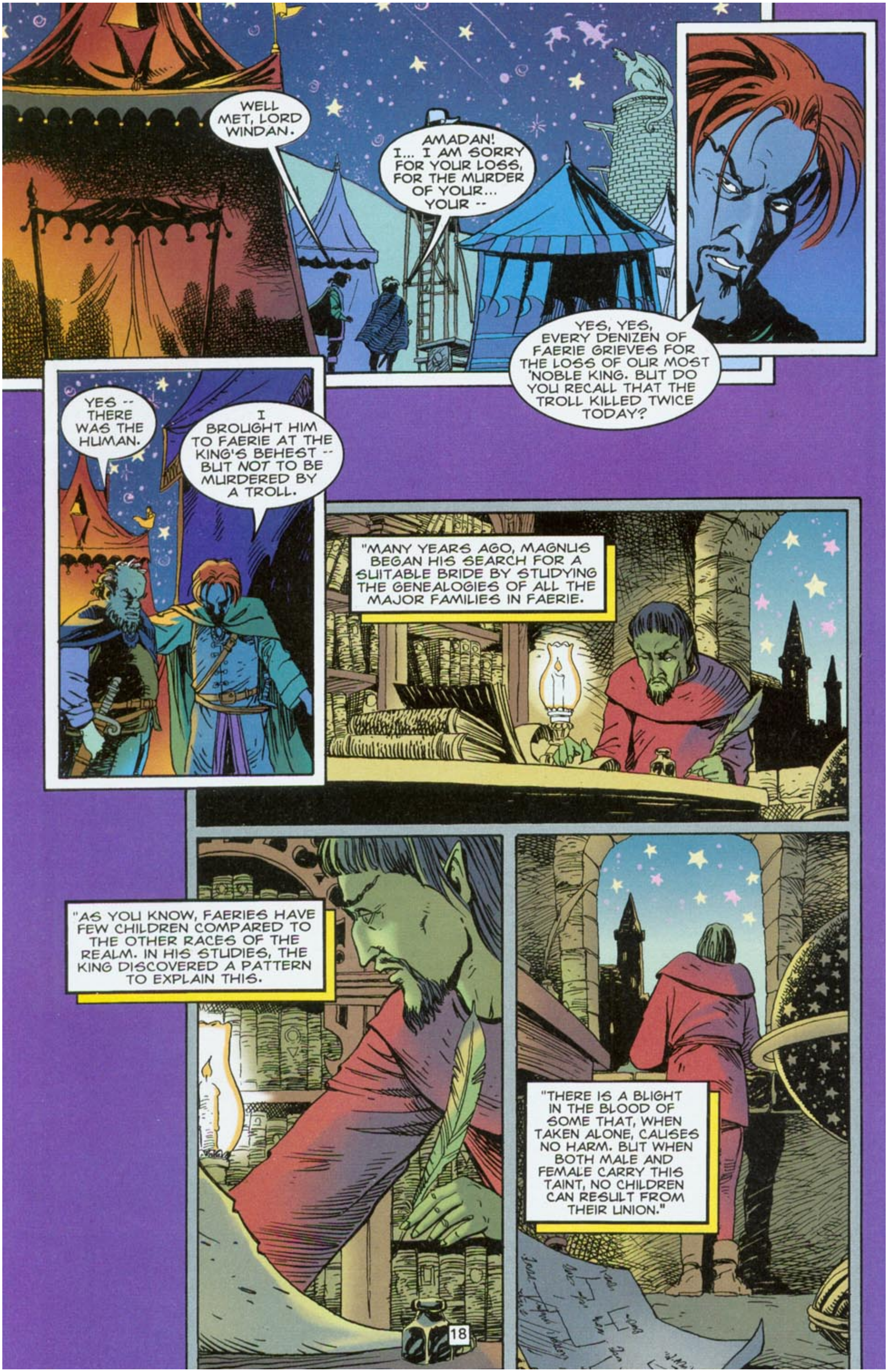

WHO -- WHAT D'YE MEAN?
HOW DARE YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON YOUR KING!
ARRRH!
AAAA!
AYE... A *TROLL*... I *BE*.

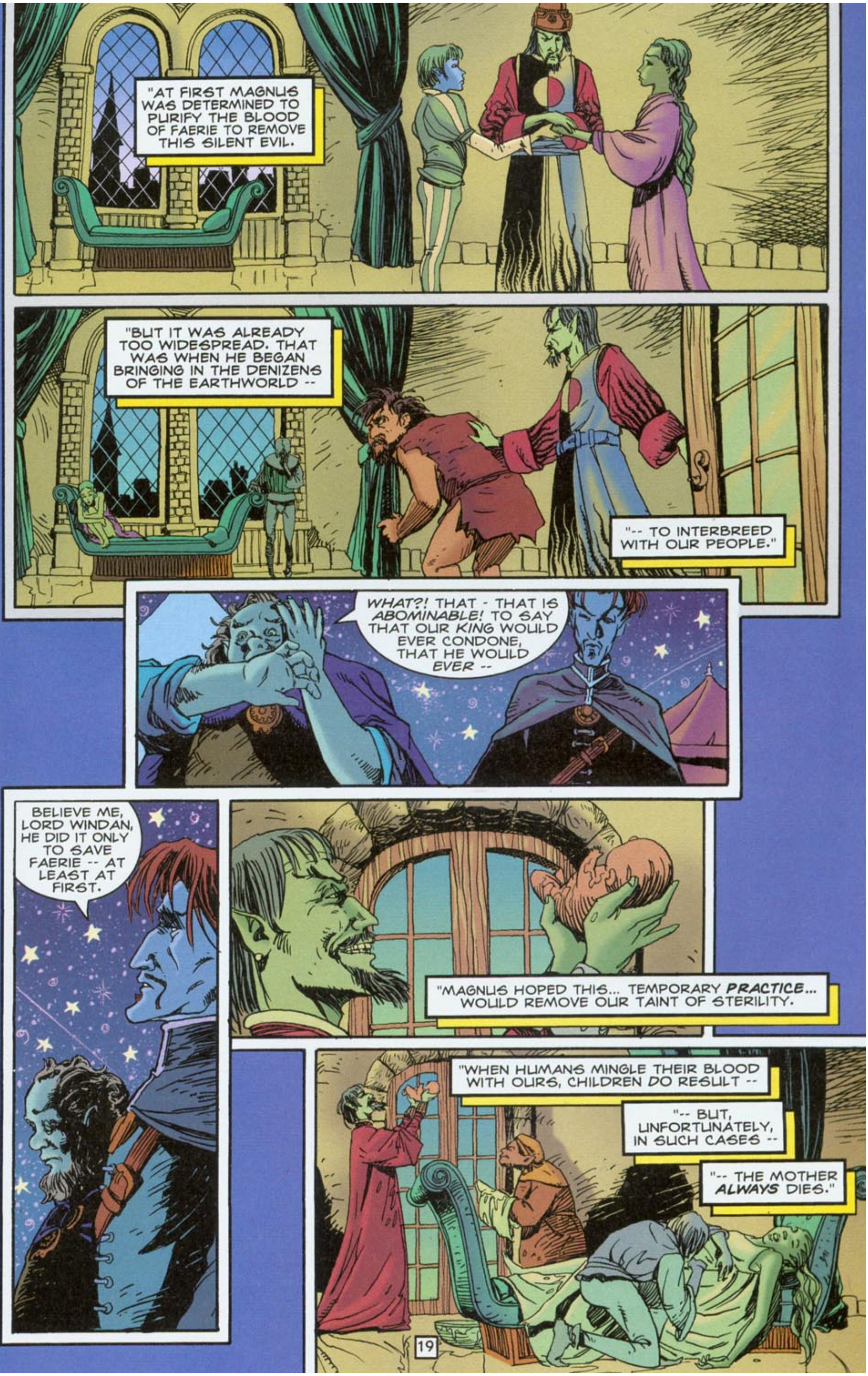

I...
Aww, I NEVER MEANT TO KILL HIM! NEVER! I NEVER MEANT HARM TO THE KING!
THE KING!
GET THE TROLL!
AFTER HIM!
OWWW!
WATCH IT!
OOMPH!
OUT OF THE WAY!
SORRY SIR!
Awww, I NEVER MEANT HIM HARM!
THE KING IS DEAD!
LONG LIVE THE KING!
YESH! LONG LIVE THE KING! LONG LIVE THE KING!
BUT... I -- I NEVER THOUGHT...
WHO IS KING NOW?

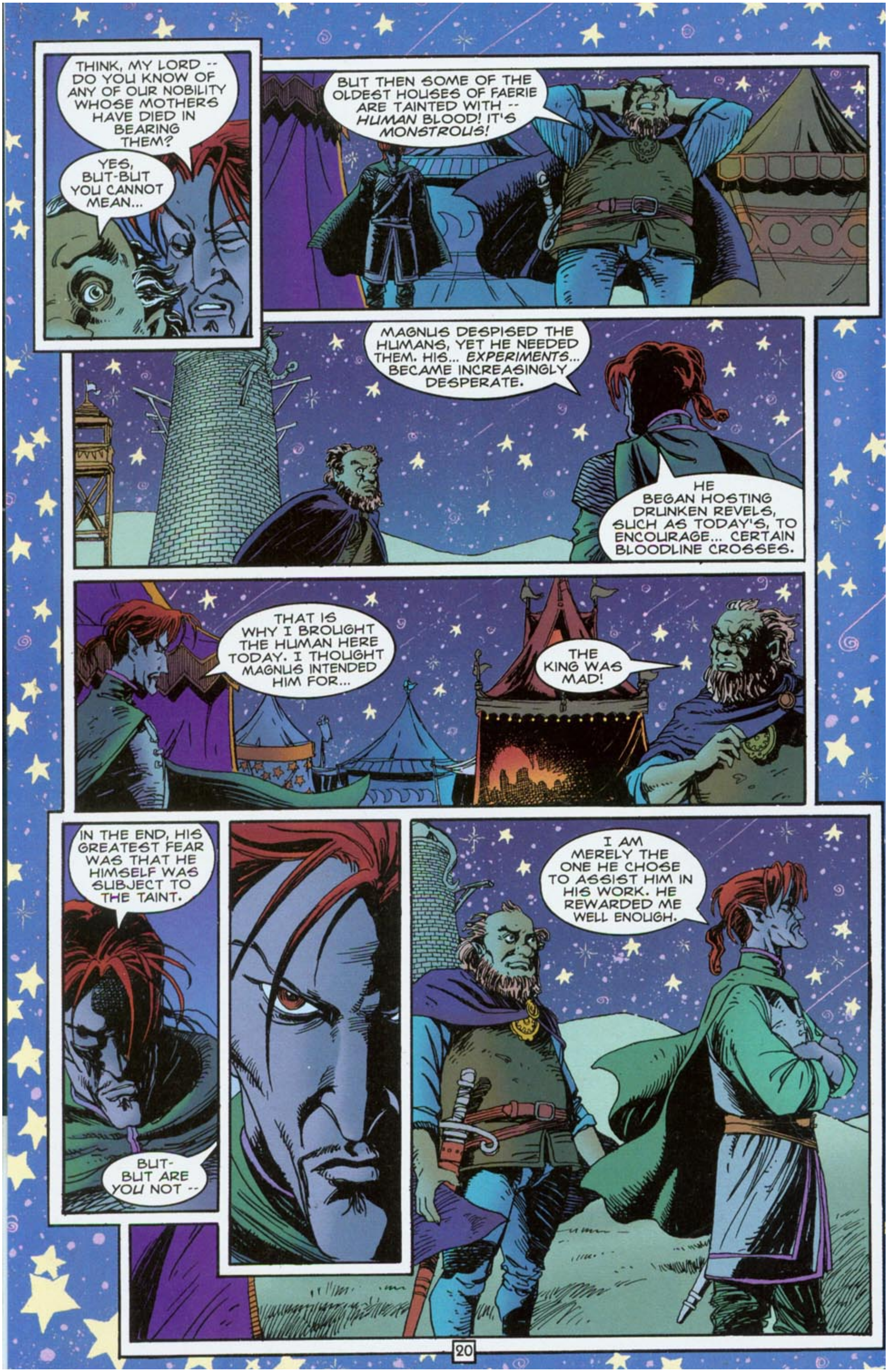

SEVERAL HOURS LATER...
AS ELDEST COUNCILOR TO OUR LATE KING MAGNUS, I SHALL PRESIDE OVER THIS ASSEMBLY OF THE NOBLE LORDS OF FAERIE.
IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT WE ARE DEVASTATED BY OUR TRAGIC LOSS, AND SO ON --
-- AND THEREFORE WE SHALL TURN AT ONCE TO OTHER MATTERS.
FIRST -- THAT THE TROLL STURM IS HEREBY ADJUDGED GUILTY OF THE TREASONOUS MURDER OF OUR MOST GRACIOUS KING, AND UPON HIS CAPTURE SHALL SUFFER THE PENALTY OF DEATH.
HEAR! HEAR!
HAS ANYONE GONE AFTER THE TROLL?
JASPER, LORD DUNNAN, HAS LED A SMALL PARTY IN PURSUIT OF THE TRAITOR.
DUNNAN, Eh? VERY GOOD.
WE NEED NOT CONCERN OURSELVES FURTHER WITH THE TROLL'S CAPTURE.
BUT WAS THIS MOST SHOCKING MURDER THE WORK OF ONE LONE TRAITOR, OR WAS HE SUPPORTED BY OTHERS OF HIS KIND -- CREATURES WHO WOULD SEEK TO OVERTHROW THE RIGHTFUL ORDER?
LORD KENELM -- I WAS PRESENT AT... THE KING'S DEATH, AND I AM CERTAIN IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.

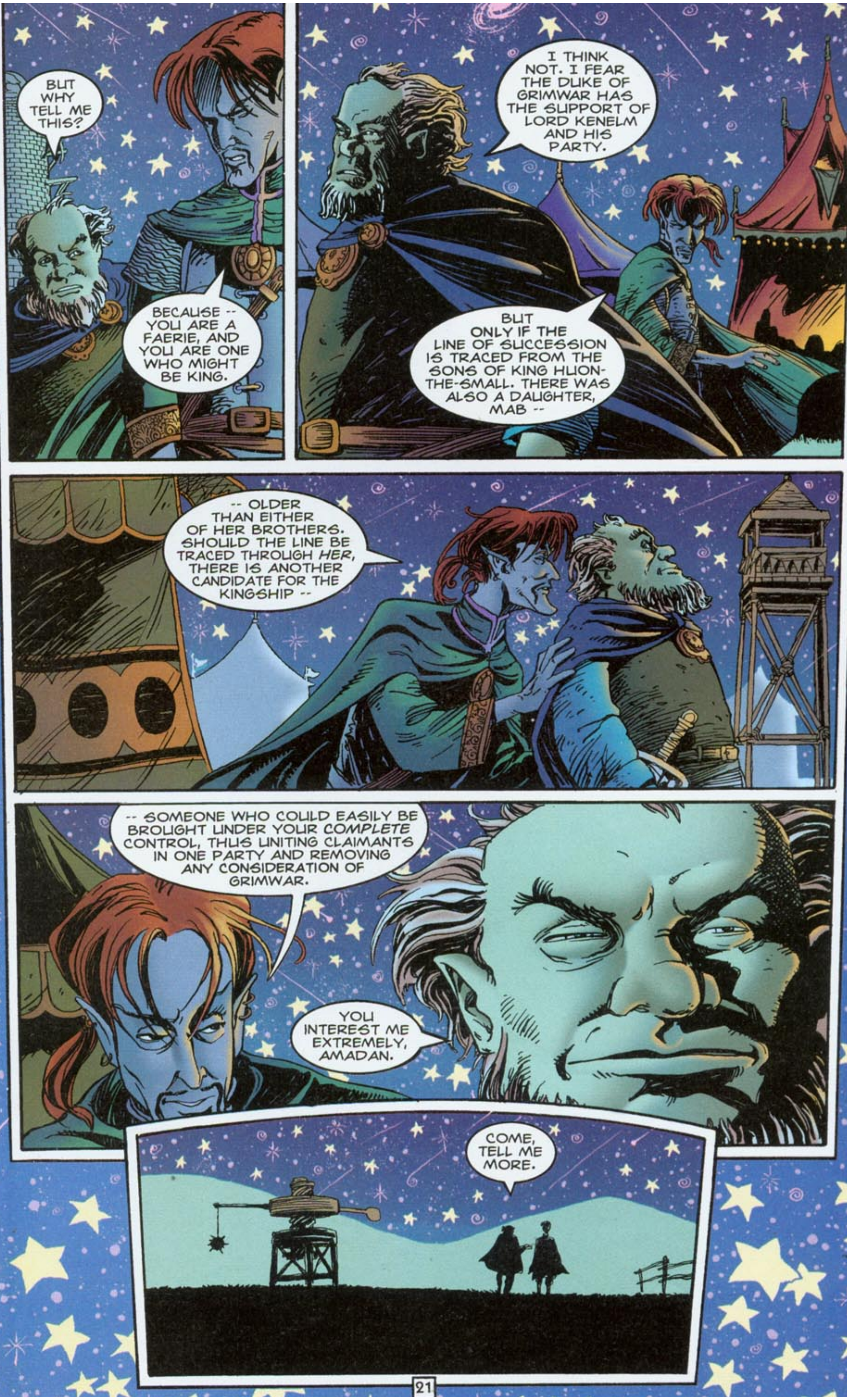

SO IT IS YOUR TESTIMONY THAT THIS WAS AN *ACCIDENTAL* REGICIDE, OBREY, LORD WINDAN?
I AM CERTAIN.
VERY WELL THEN. AND IS IT YOUR OPINION THAT WE NEED TAKE NO REPRISALS AGAINST THE NON-FAIRIE CREATURES OF THE REALM?
OF COURSE! EVEN HAD STURM *NOT* ACTED ALONE --
THANK YOU, LORD WINDAN. NOW, TO THE MATTER OF THE SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE: HAVING DIED UNEXPECTEDLY, OUR LATE KING HAS LEFT NO CLEARLY DESIGNATED SUCCESSOR.
THERE *IS* ONE WHO IS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO BE THE... RESULT... OF A DALLIANCE BETWEEN OUR DEAR KING AND --
-- AND THE HAG OF IRON WELL. INDEED, LORD AMADAN *IS* THE NEAREST IN LINE TO THE THRONE.
OBREY! QUIET, MAN!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I SEE LORD AMADAN HAS STAYED AWAY FROM THIS COUNCIL; YOU COULD LEARN MUCH FROM HIS DISCRETION, LORD WINDAN.
MAGNUS NEVER ACKNOWLEDGED ANY CHILDREN DURING HIS LIFETIME, SO WE MAY DISCOUNT THE QUESTION OF DIRECT SUCCESSION.
OFFICIALLY, MAGNUS'S LINE HAS ENDED.

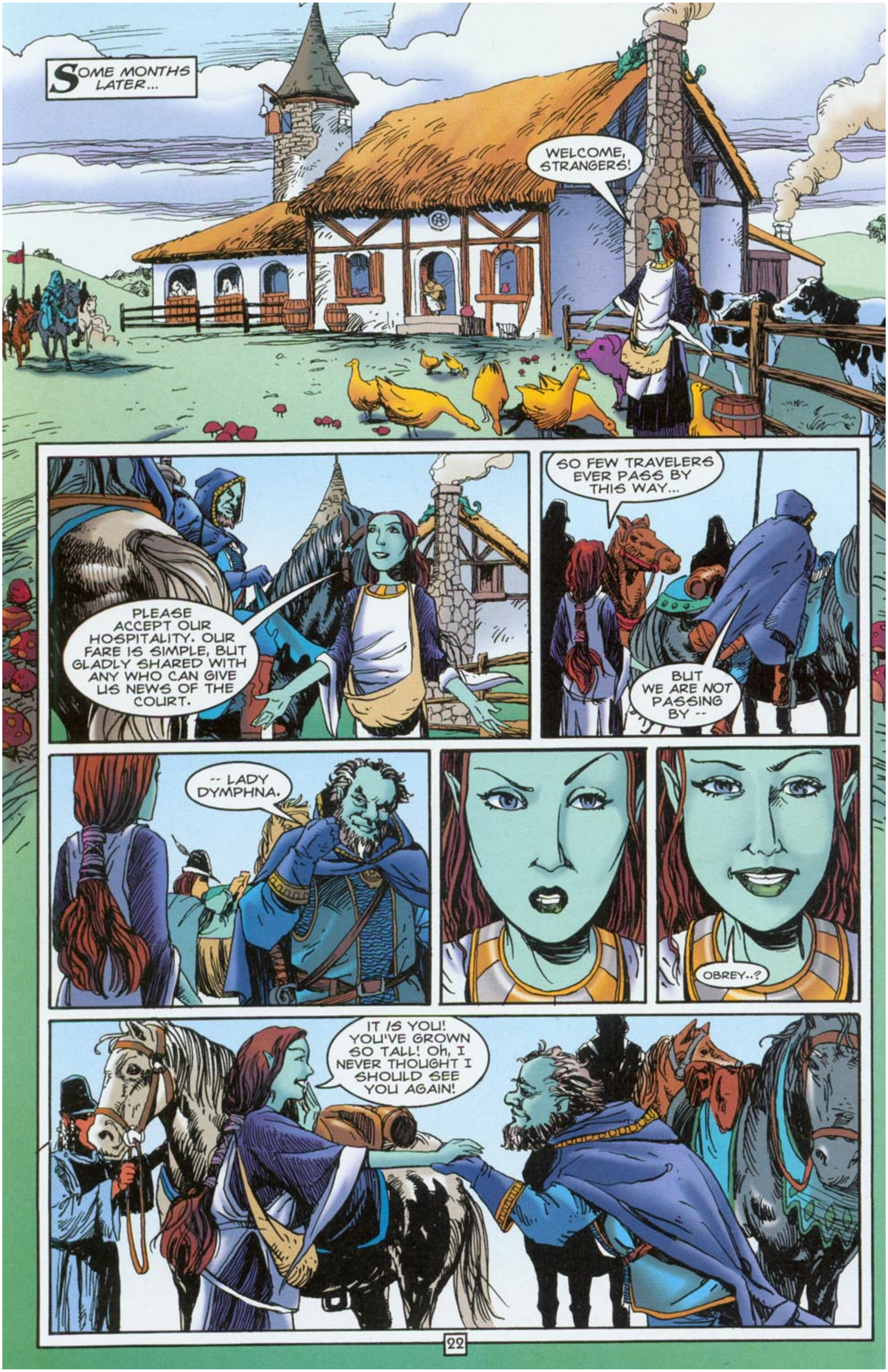

MAGNUS IS DIRECTLY DESCENDED FROM THE ELDEST SON OF KING HAAKON, ELDER SON OF HUON-THE-SMALL.
BY DIRECT DESCENT FROM HAAKON'S YOUNGER SON, THERE ARE TWO CANDIDATES FOR THE THRONE OF FAERIE... HUONNOR, DUKE OF GRIMWAR... AND --
-- OBREY, LORD WINDAN.
LITTLE IS KNOWN OF MY COUSIN OF GRIMWAR, BUT I AM SURE THERE ARE MANY HERE WHO HAVE SEEN PROOF OF MY OWN HONOR -- AS RECENTLY AS TODAY.
INDEED, WE HAVE SEEN *EXACTLY* YOUR IDEA OF HONOR -- AND OF *LOYALTY* TO YOUR FRIENDS. I STAND WITH **GRIMWAR!**
SILENCE!
THE FULL SUPPORT OF THESE NOBLE LORDS IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY WHO WOULD RULE THE REALM OF FAERIE. I MUST ASK YOU, LORD WINDAN, AS CANDIDATE TO THE THRONE, TO REMOVE YOURSELF FROM OUR DELIBERATIONS. PLEASE LEAVE US.

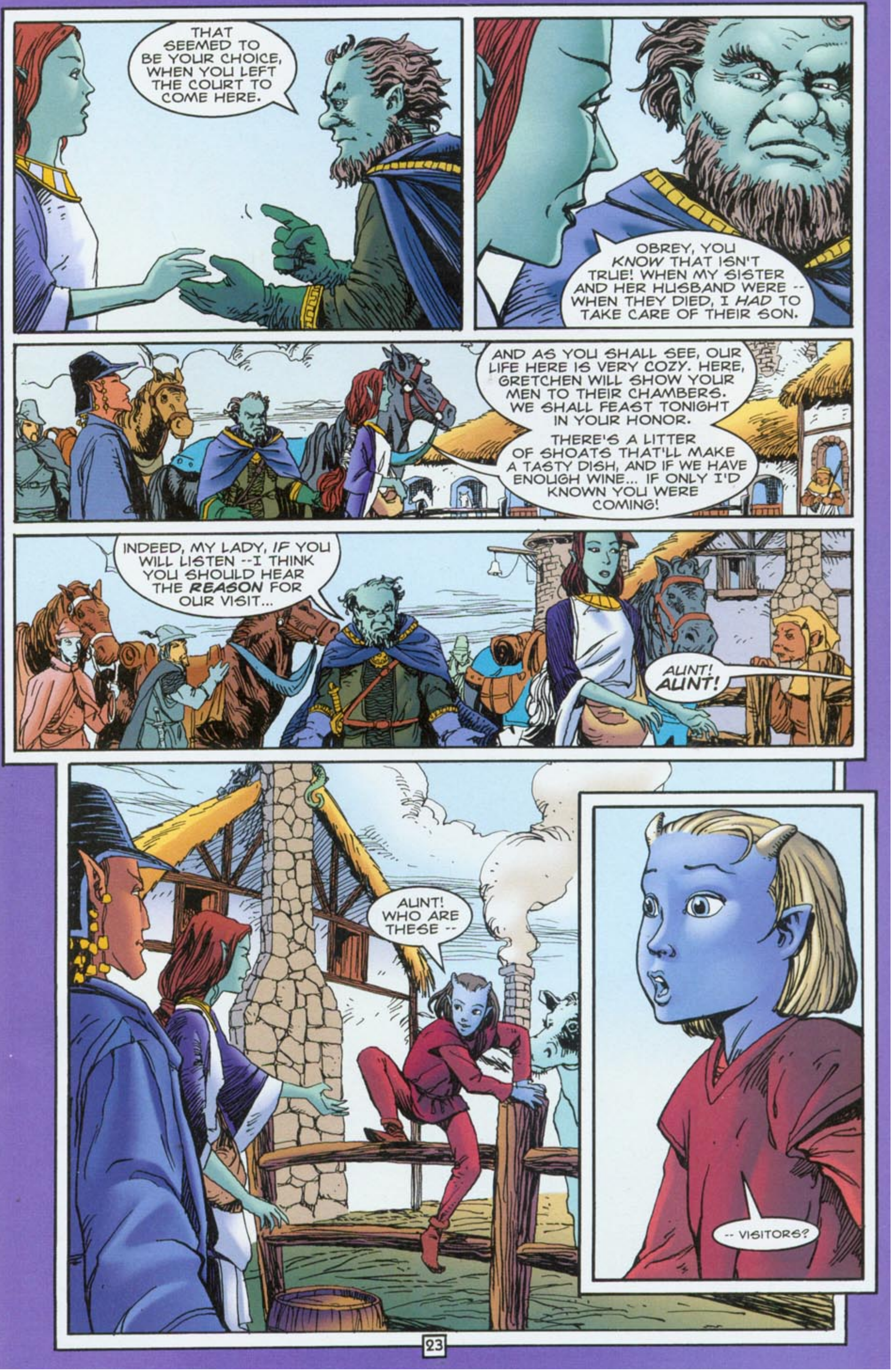

WELL MET, LORD WINDAN.
AMADAN! I... I AM SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS, FOR THE MURDER OF YOUR... YOUR --
YES, YES, EVERY DENIZEN OF FAERIE GRIEVES FOR THE LOSS OF OUR MOST NOBLE KING. BUT DO YOU RECALL THAT THE TROLL KILLED TWICE TODAY?
YES -- THERE WAS THE HUMAN.
I BROUGHT HIM TO FAERIE AT THE KING'S BEHEST -- BUT *NOT* TO BE MURDERED BY A TROLL.
"MANY YEARS AGO, MAGNUS BEGAN HIS SEARCH FOR A SUITABLE BRIDE BY STUDYING THE GENEALOGIES OF ALL THE MAJOR FAMILIES IN FAERIE.
"AS YOU KNOW, FAERIES HAVE FEW CHILDREN COMPARED TO THE OTHER RACES OF THE REALM. IN HIS STUDIES, THE KING DISCOVERED A PATTERN TO EXPLAIN THIS.
"THERE IS A BLIGHT IN THE BLOOD OF SOME THAT, WHEN TAKEN ALONE, CAUSES NO HARM. BUT WHEN BOTH MALE AND FEMALE CARRY THIS TAINT, NO CHILDREN CAN RESULT FROM THEIR UNION."

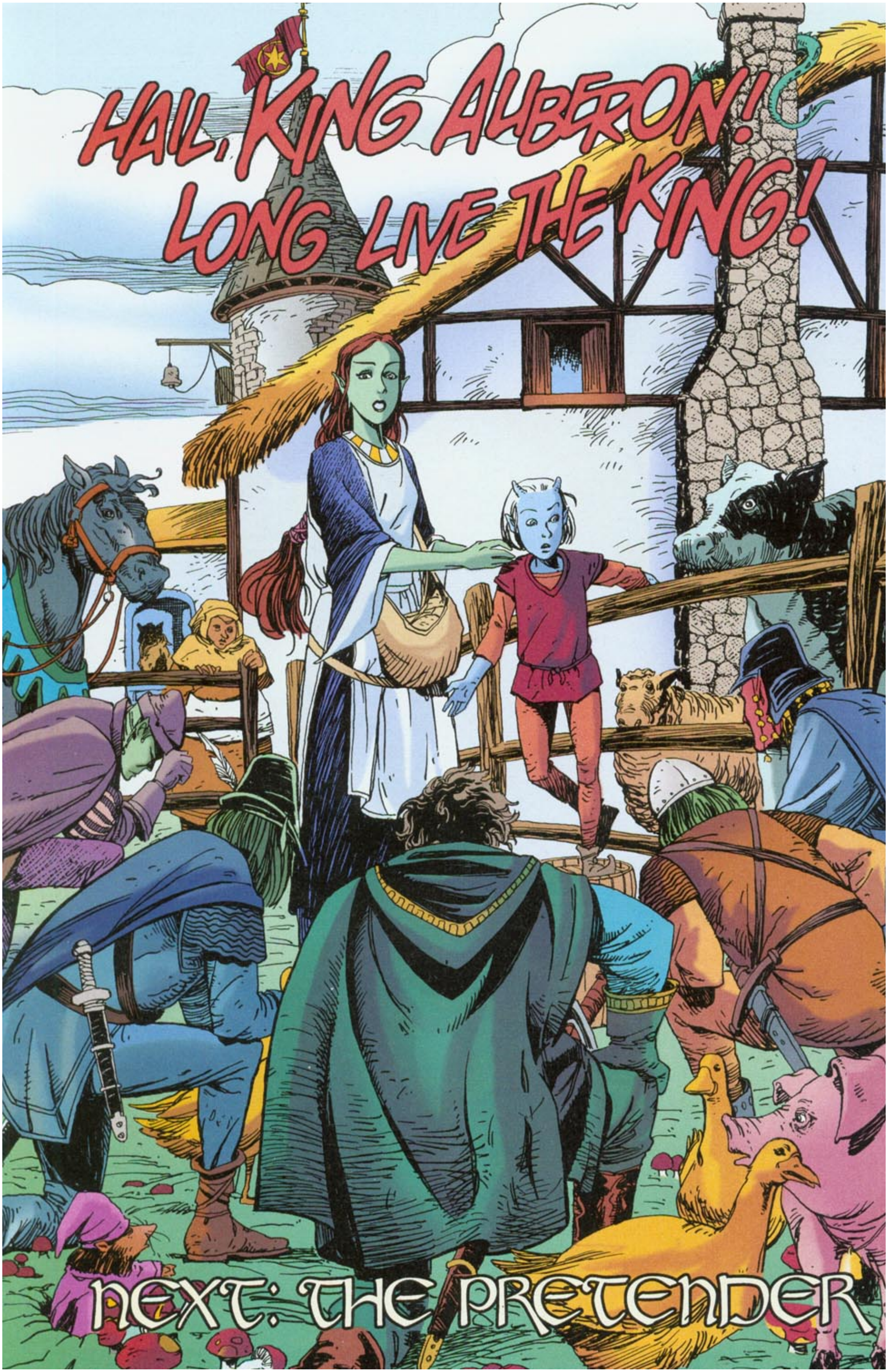

"AT FIRST MAGNUS WAS DETERMINED TO PURIFY THE BLOOD OF FAERIE TO REMOVE THIS SILENT EVIL.
"BUT IT WAS ALREADY TOO WIDESPREAD. THAT WAS WHEN HE BEGAN BRINGING IN THE DENIZENS OF THE EARTHWORLD --
"-- TO INTERBREED WITH OUR PEOPLE."
WHAT?! THAT - THAT IS *ABOMINABLE!* TO SAY THAT OUR *KING* WOULD EVER CONDONE, THAT HE WOULD *EVER* --
BELIEVE ME, LORD WINDAN, HE DID IT ONLY TO SAVE FAERIE -- AT LEAST AT FIRST.
"MAGNUS HOPED THIS... TEMPORARY ***PRACTICE***... WOULD REMOVE OUR TAINT OF STERILITY.
"WHEN HUMANS MINGLE THEIR BLOOD WITH OURS, CHILDREN *DO* RESULT --
"-- BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, IN SUCH CASES --
"-- THE MOTHER ***ALWAYS*** DIES."

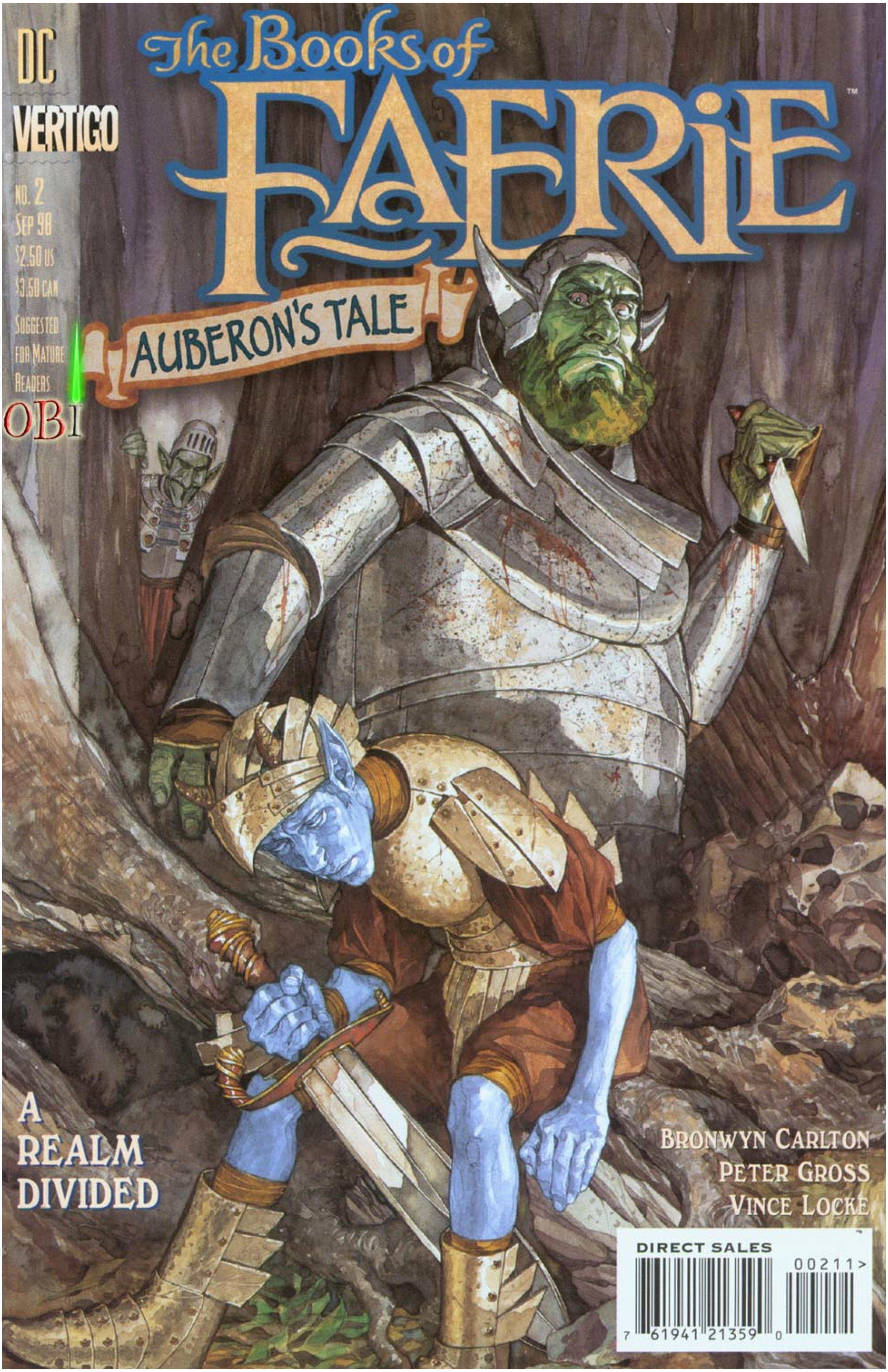

THINK, MY LORD -- DO YOU KNOW OF ANY OF OUR NOBILITY WHOSE MOTHERS HAVE DIED IN BEARING THEM?
YES, BUT-BUT YOU CANNOT MEAN...
BUT THEN SOME OF THE OLDEST HOUSES OF FAERIE ARE TAINTED WITH -- *HUMAN* BLOOD! IT'S *MONSTROUS!*
MAGNUS DESPISED THE HUMANS, YET HE NEEDED THEM. HIS... *EXPERIMENTS*... BECAME INCREASINGLY DESPERATE.
HE BEGAN HOSTING DRUNKEN REVELS, SUCH AS TODAY'S, TO ENCOURAGE... CERTAIN BLOODLINE CROSSES.
THAT IS WHY I BROUGHT THE HUMAN HERE TODAY. I THOUGHT MAGNUS INTENDED HIM FOR...
THE KING WAS MAD!
IN THE END, HIS GREATEST FEAR WAS THAT HE HIMSELF WAS SUBJECT TO THE TAINT.
BUT- BUT ARE *YOU* NOT --
I AM MERELY THE ONE HE CHOSE TO ASSIST HIM IN HIS WORK. HE REWARDED ME WELL ENOUGH.


BUT WHY TELL ME THIS?
BECAUSE -- YOU ARE A FAERIE, AND YOU ARE ONE WHO MIGHT BE KING.
I THINK NOT. I FEAR THE DUKE OF GRIMWAR HAS THE SUPPORT OF LORD KENELM AND HIS PARTY.
BUT ONLY IF THE LINE OF SUCCESSION IS TRACED FROM THE SONS OF KING HUON-THE-SMALL. THERE WAS ALSO A DAUGHTER, MAB --
-- OLDER THAN EITHER OF HER BROTHERS. SHOULD THE LINE BE TRACED THROUGH *HER*, THERE IS ANOTHER CANDIDATE FOR THE KINGSHIP --
-- SOMEONE WHO COULD EASILY BE BROUGHT UNDER YOUR *COMPLETE* CONTROL, THUS UNITING CLAIMANTS IN ONE PARTY AND REMOVING ANY CONSIDERATION OF GRIMWAR.
YOU INTEREST ME EXTREMELY, AMADAN.
COME, TELL ME MORE.


SOME MONTHS LATER...
WELCOME, STRANGERS!
PLEASE ACCEPT OUR HOSPITALITY. OUR FARE IS SIMPLE, BUT GLADLY SHARED WITH ANY WHO CAN GIVE US NEWS OF THE COURT.
SO FEW TRAVELERS EVER PASS BY THIS WAY...
BUT WE ARE NOT PASSING BY --
-- LADY DYMPHNA.
OBREY..?
IT *IS* YOU! YOU'VE GROWN SO TALL! Oh, I NEVER THOUGHT I SHOULD SEE YOU AGAIN!


THAT SEEMED TO BE YOUR CHOICE, WHEN YOU LEFT THE COURT TO COME HERE.
OBREY, YOU *KNOW* THAT ISN'T TRUE! WHEN MY SISTER AND HER HUSBAND WERE -- WHEN THEY DIED, I *HAD* TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR SON.
AND AS YOU SHALL SEE, OUR LIFE HERE IS VERY COZY. HERE, GRETCHEN WILL SHOW YOUR MEN TO THEIR CHAMBERS. WE SHALL FEAST TONIGHT IN YOUR HONOR.
THERE'S A LITTER OF SHOATS THAT'LL MAKE A TASTY DISH, AND IF WE HAVE ENOUGH WINE... IF ONLY I'D KNOWN YOU WERE COMING!
INDEED, MY LADY, *IF* YOU WILL LISTEN --I THINK YOU SHOULD HEAR THE ***REASON*** FOR OUR VISIT...
AUNT! ***AUNT!***
AUNT! WHO ARE THESE --
-- VISITORS?


HAIL, KING AUBERON! LONG LIVE THE KING!
NEXT: THE PRETENDER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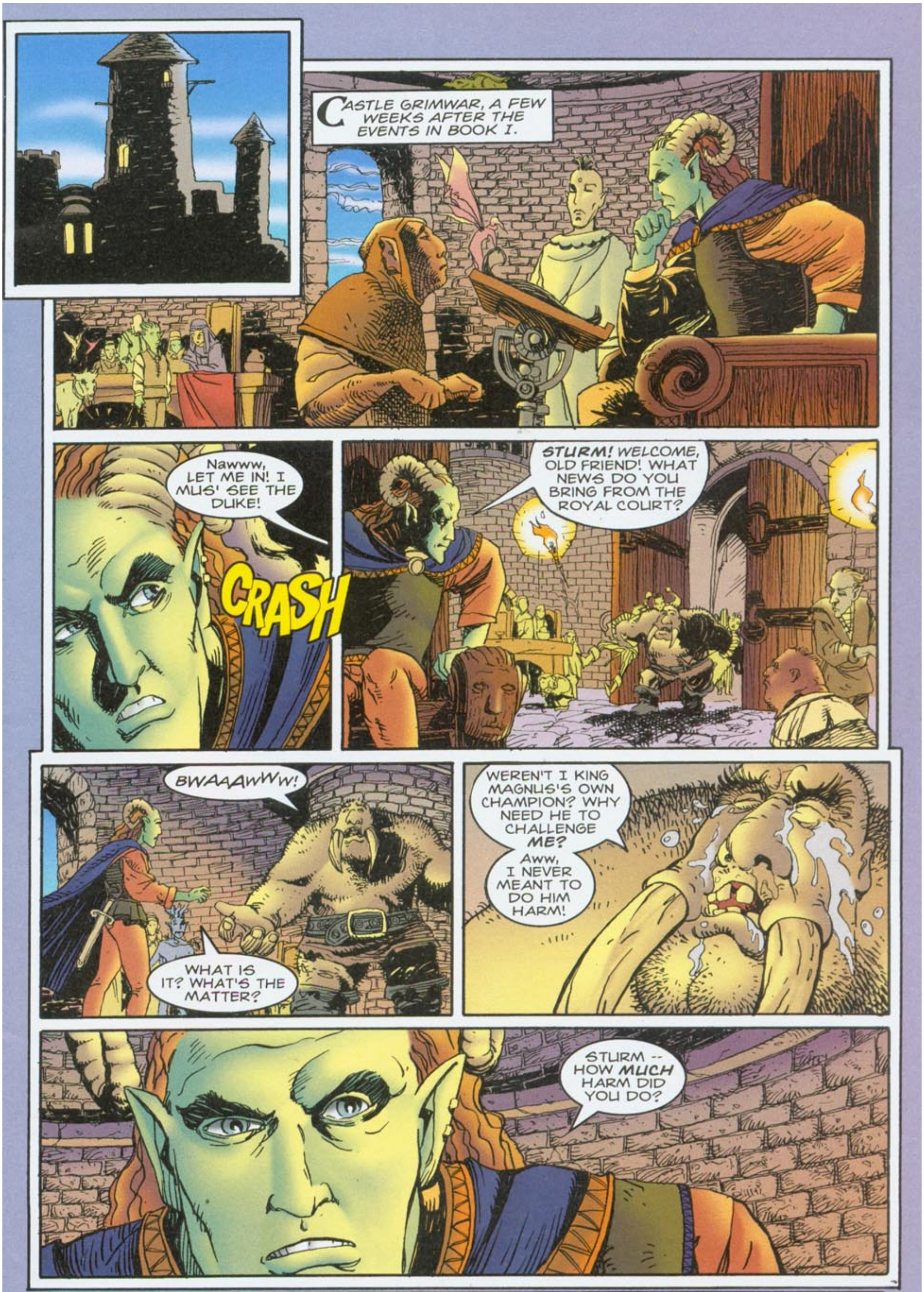
CASTLE GRIMWAR, A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE EVENTS IN BOOK I.
Nawww, LET ME IN! I MUS' SEE THE DUKE!
CRASH
STURM! WELCOME, OLD FRIEND! WHAT NEWS DO YOU BRING FROM THE ROYAL COURT?
BWAAAWWW!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WEREN'T I KING MAGNUS'S OWN CHAMPION? WHY NEED HE TO CHALLENGE ME?
Aww, I NEVER MEANT TO DO HIM HARM!
STURM -- HOW MUCH HARM DID YOU DO?

THE BOOKS OF FAERIE: AUBERON'S TALE 2. September, 1998. Published monthly by DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Copyright © 1998 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. DC, VERTIGO and all characters featured in this issue, the distinctive likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. Printed on recyclable paper. Printed in Canada.

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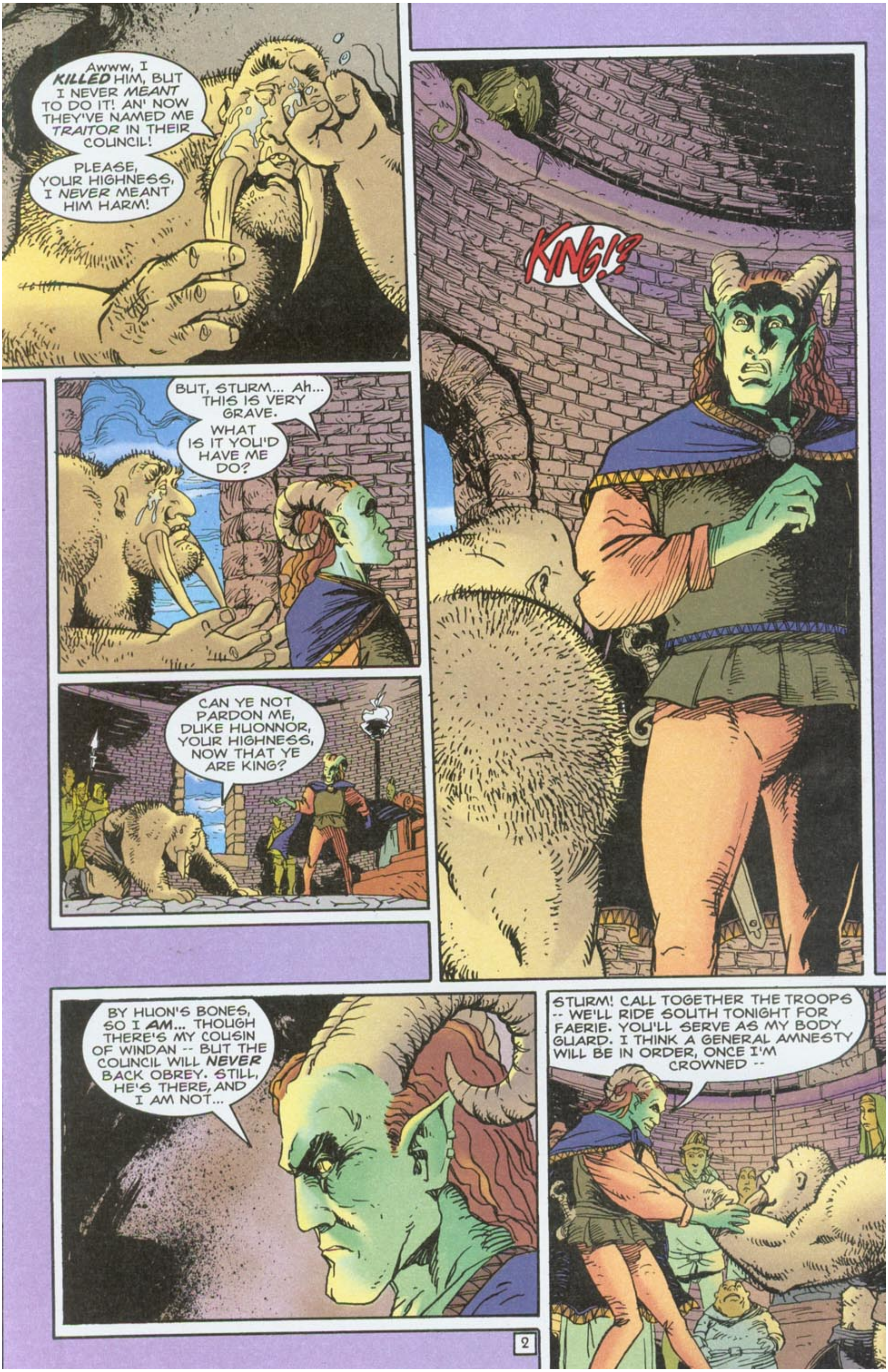
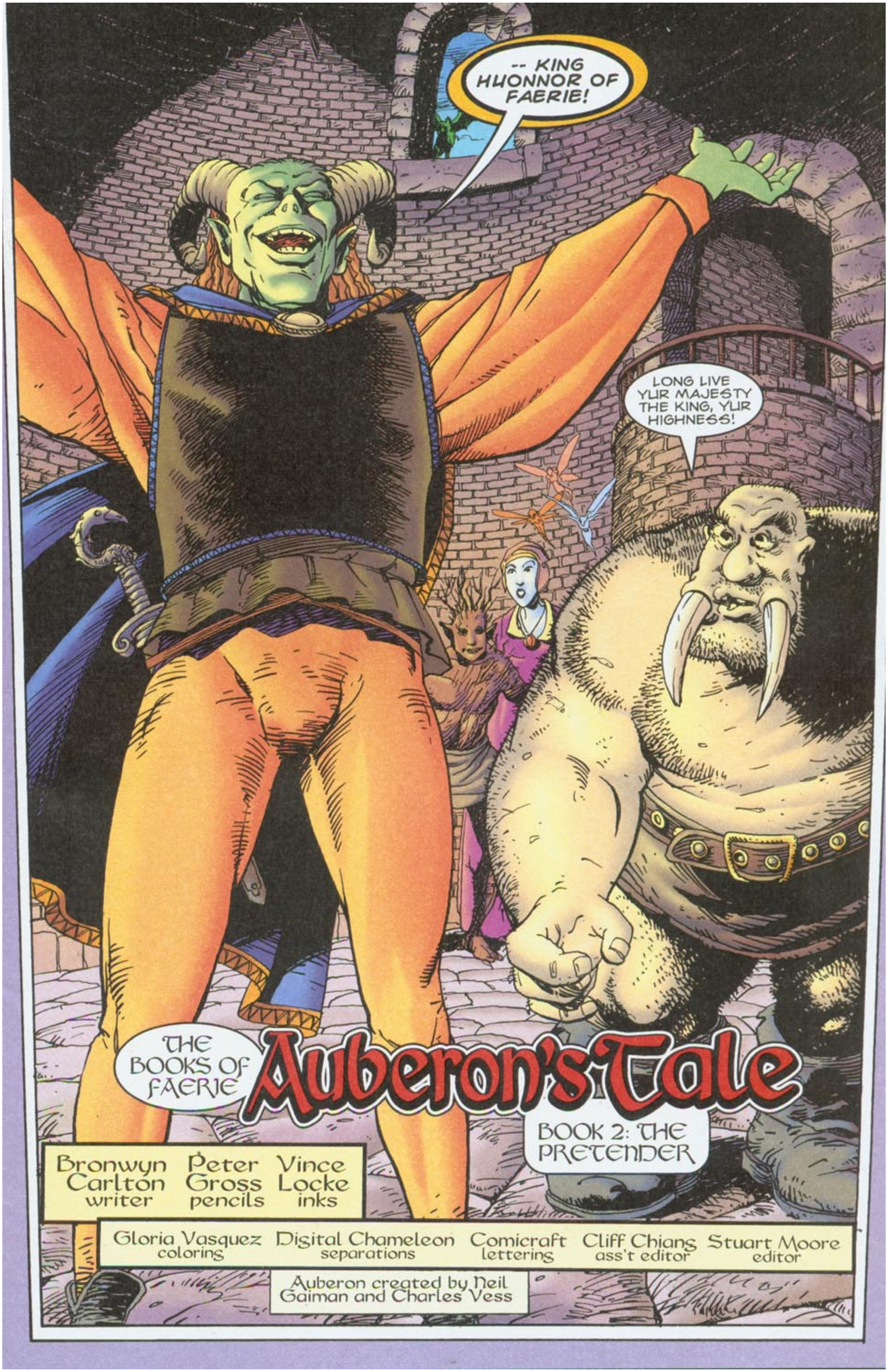
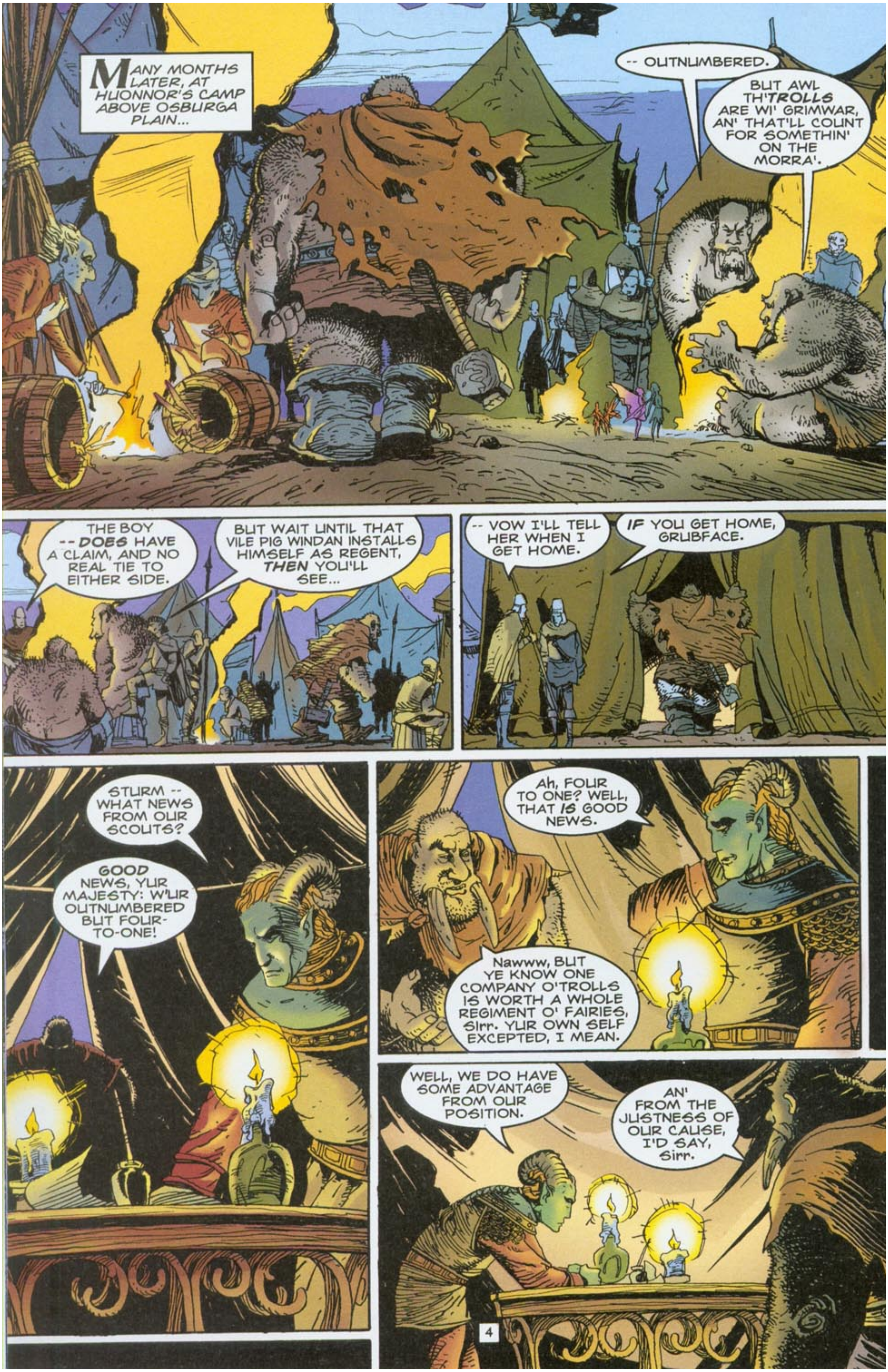
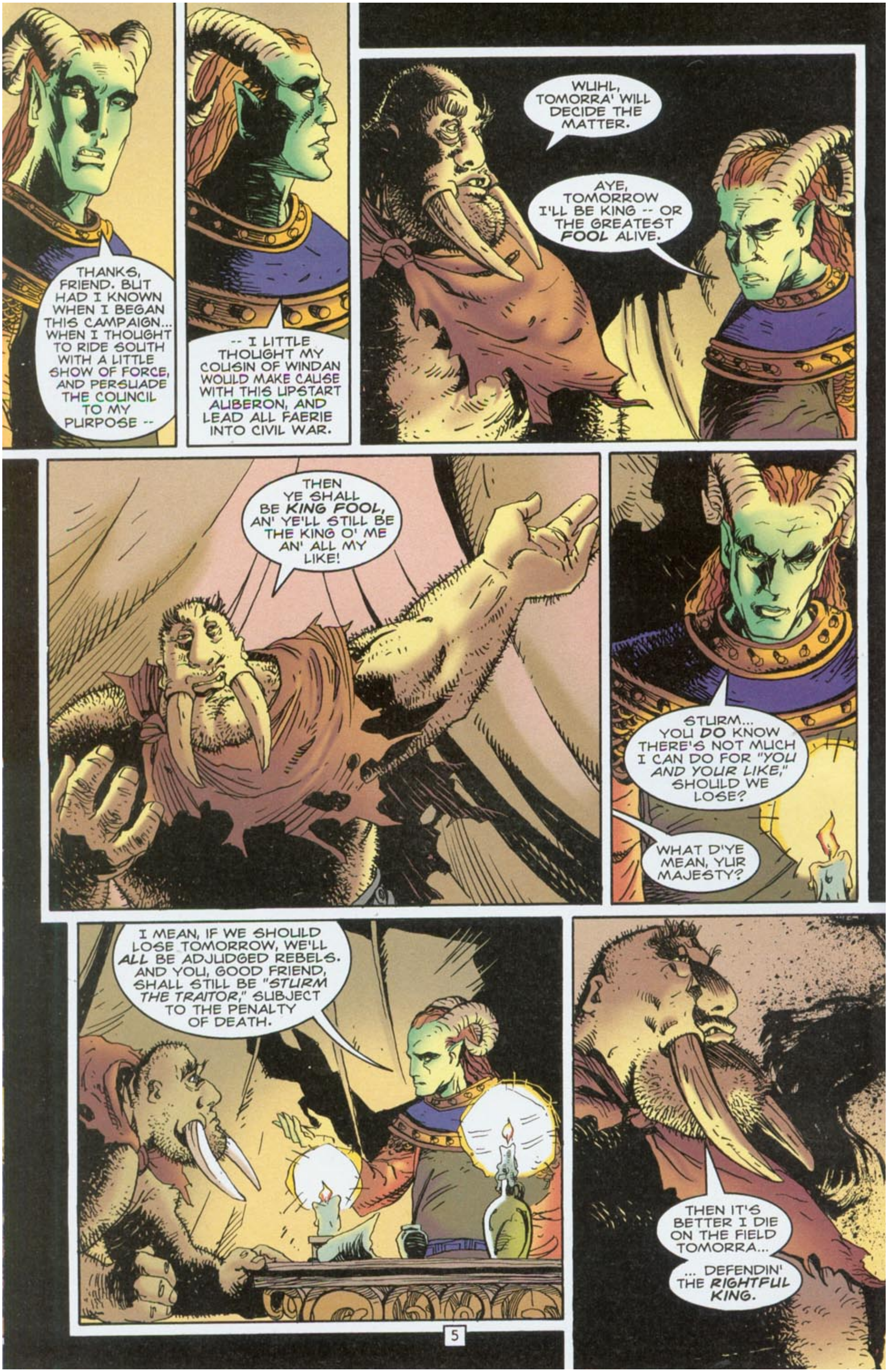
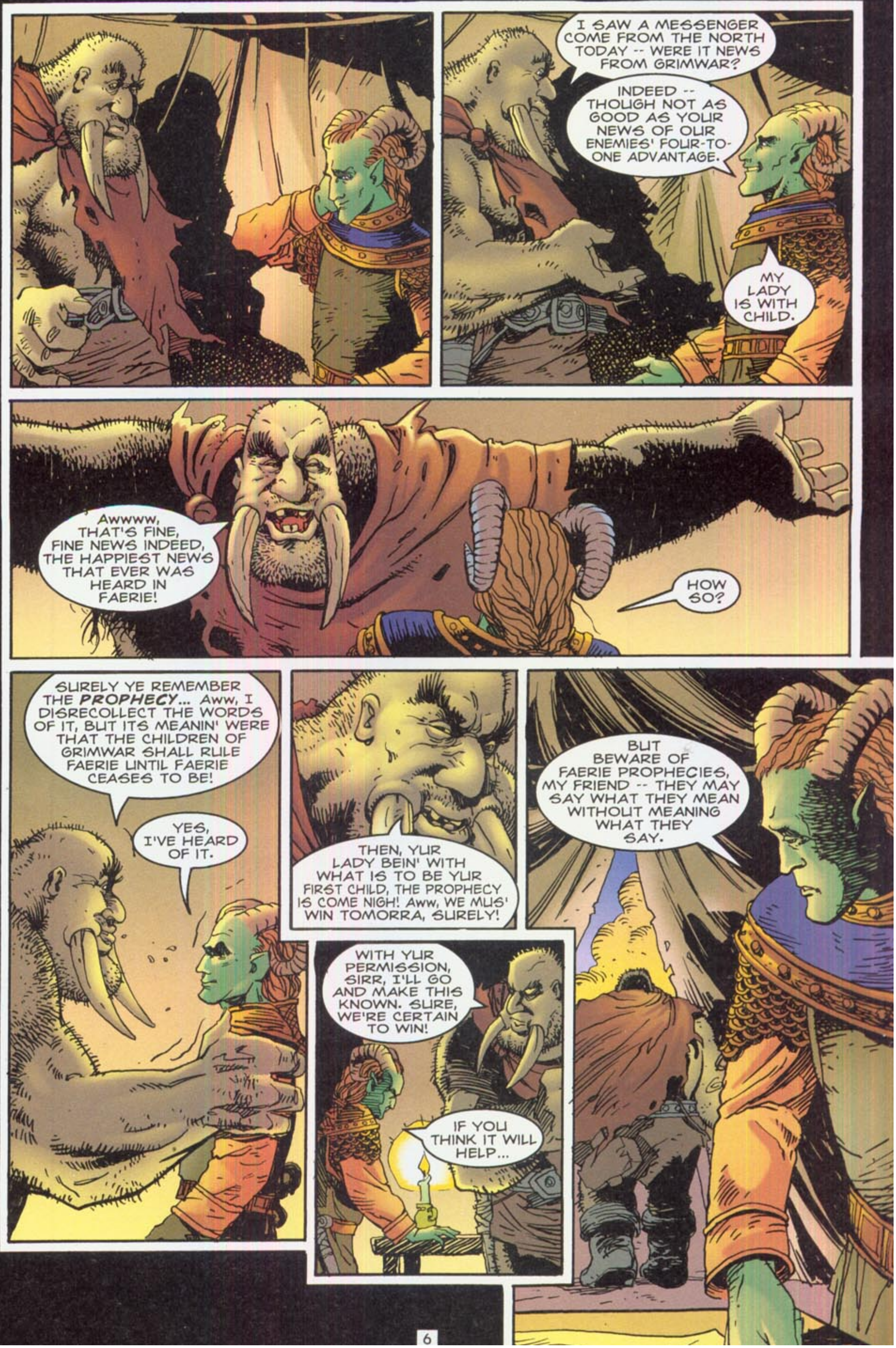
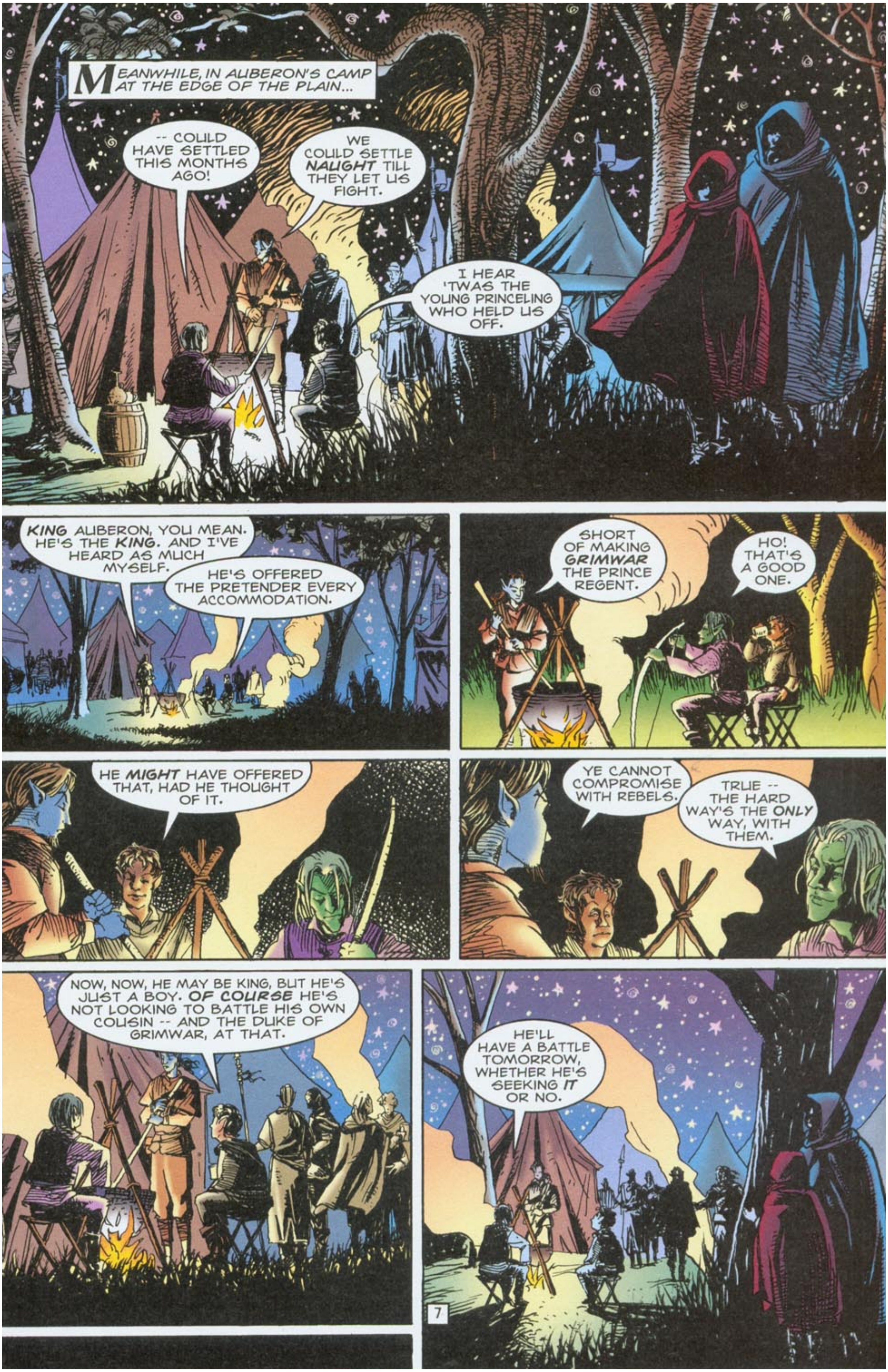

Awww, I *KILLED* HIM, BUT I NEVER *MEANT* TO DO IT! AN' NOW THEY'VE NAMED ME *TRAITOR* IN THEIR COUNCIL!
PLEASE, YOUR HIGHNESS, I *NEVER* MEANT HIM HARM!
KING!?
BUT, STURM... Ah... THIS IS VERY GRAVE. WHAT IS IT YOU'D HAVE ME DO?
CAN YE NOT PARDON ME, DUKE HUONNOR, YOUR HIGHNESS, NOW THAT YE ARE KING?
BY HUON'S BONES, SO I *AM*... THOUGH THERE'S MY COUSIN OF WINDAN -- BUT THE COUNCIL WILL *NEVER* BACK OBREY. STILL, HE'S THERE, AND I AM NOT...
STURM! CALL TOGETHER THE TROOPS -- WE'LL RIDE SOUTH TONIGHT FOR FAERIE. YOU'LL SERVE AS MY BODY GUARD. I THINK A GENERAL AMNESTY WILL BE IN ORDER, ONCE I'M CROWNED --

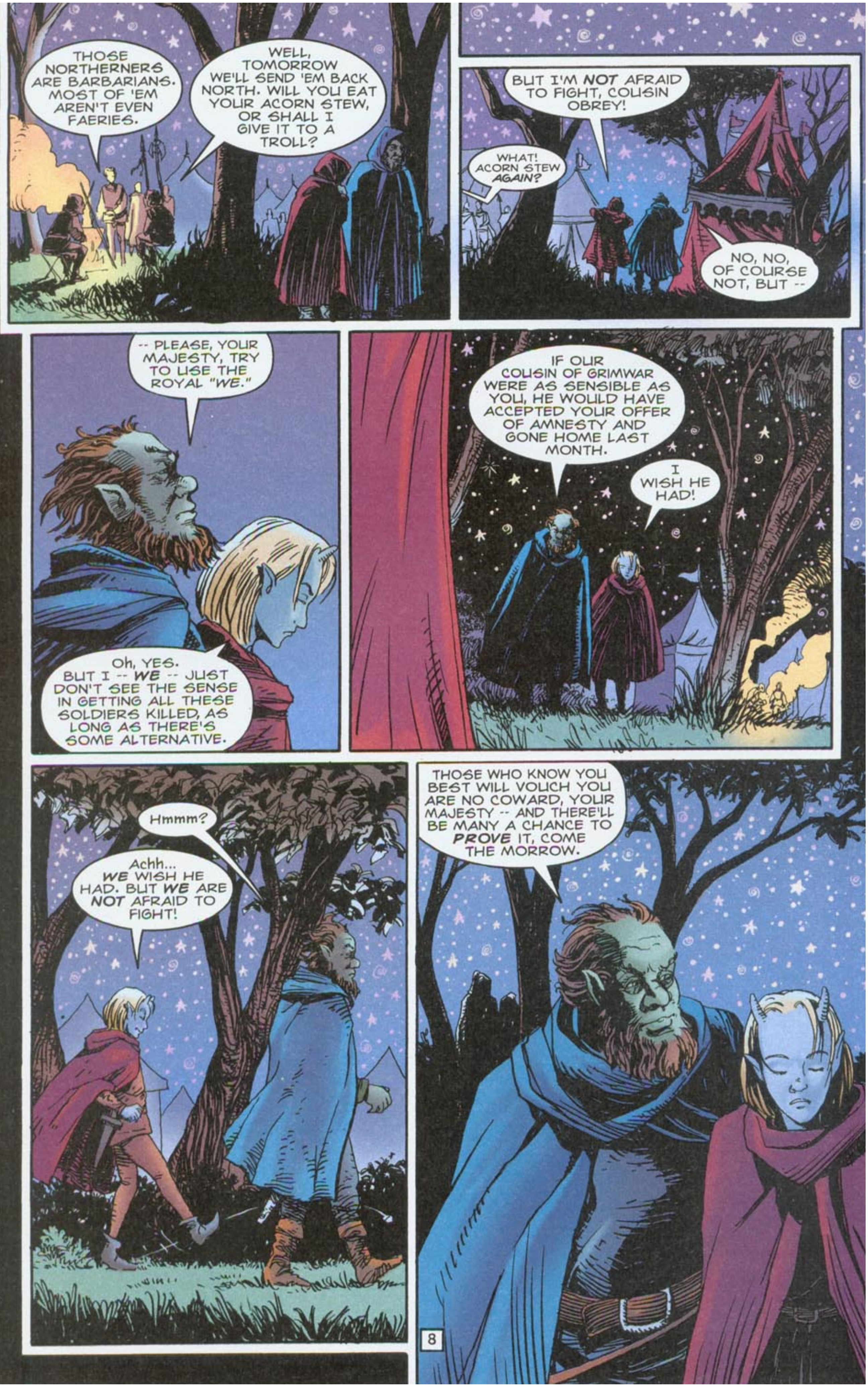

-- KING HUONNOR OF FAERIE!
LONG LIVE YUR MAJESTY THE KING, YUR HIGHNESS!
THE BOOKS OF FAERIE
Auberon's Tale
BOOK 2: THE PRETENDER
Bronwyn Carlton writer
Peter Gross pencils
Vince Locke inks
Gloria Vasquez coloring
Digital Chameleon separations
Comicraft lettering
Cliff Chiang ass't editor
Stuart Moore editor
Auberon created by Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess

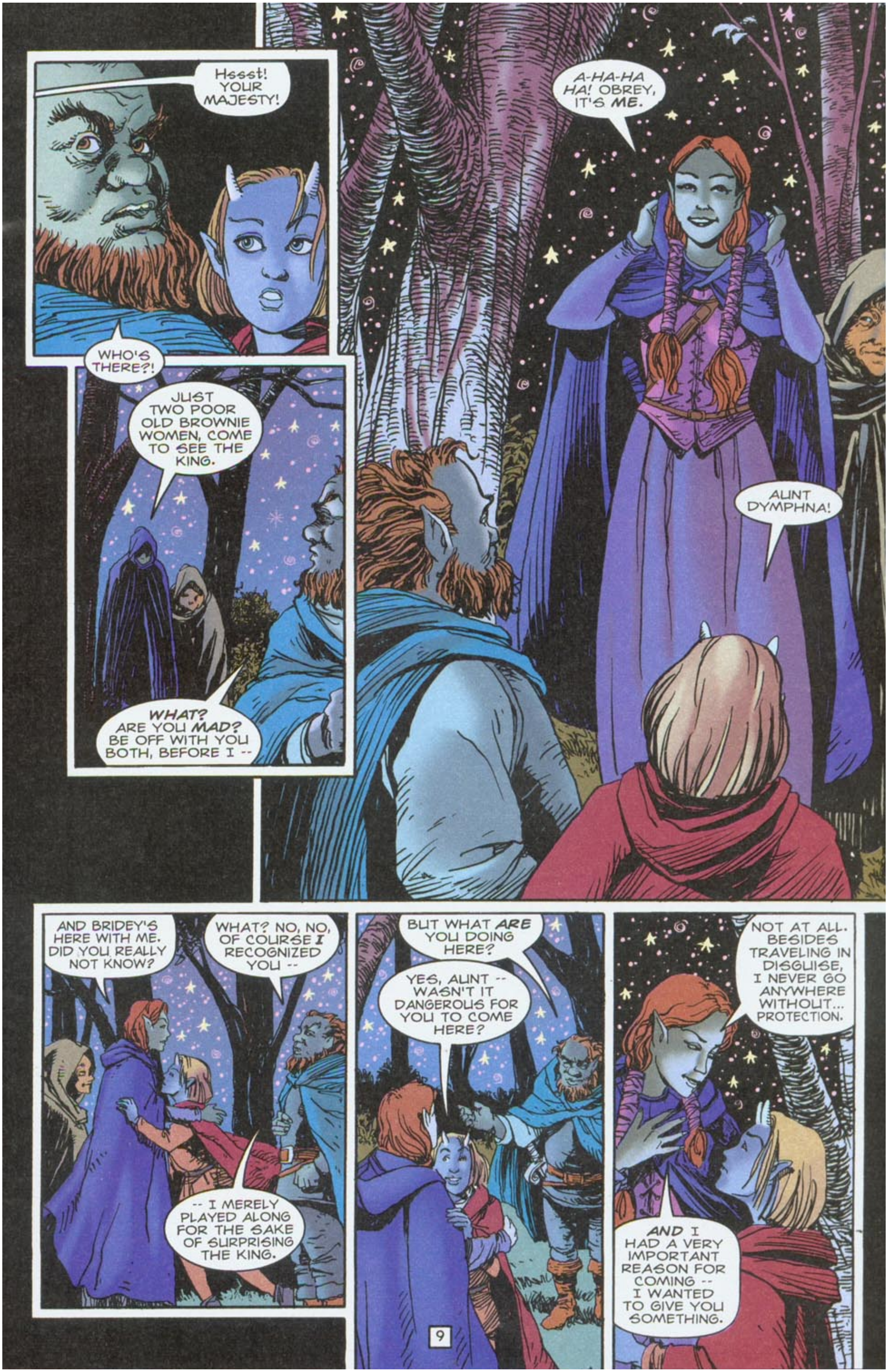

MANY MONTHS LATER, AT HUONNOR'S CAMP ABOVE OSBURGA PLAIN...
-- OUTNUMBERED.
BUT AWL TH'TROLLS ARE WI' GRIMWAR, AN' THAT'LL COUNT FOR SOMETHIN' ON THE MORRA'.
THE BOY --DOES HAVE A CLAIM, AND NO REAL TIE TO EITHER SIDE.
BUT WAIT UNTIL THAT VILE PIG WINDAN INSTALLS HIMSELF AS REGENT, THEN YOU'LL SEE...
-- VOW I'LL TELL HER WHEN I GET HOME.
IF YOU GET HOME, GRUBFACE.
STURM -- WHAT NEWS FROM OUR SCOUTS?
GOOD NEWS, YUR MAJESTY: W'UR OUTNUMBERED BUT FOUR-TO-ONE!
Ah, FOUR TO ONE? WELL, THAT IS GOOD NEWS.
Nawww, BUT YE KNOW ONE COMPANY O'TROLLS IS WORTH A WHOLE REGIMENT O' FAIRIES, Sirr. YUR OWN SELF EXCEPTED, I MEAN.
WELL, WE DO HAVE SOME ADVANTAGE FROM OUR POSITION.
AN' FROM THE JUSTNESS OF OUR CAUSE, I'D SAY, Sirr.

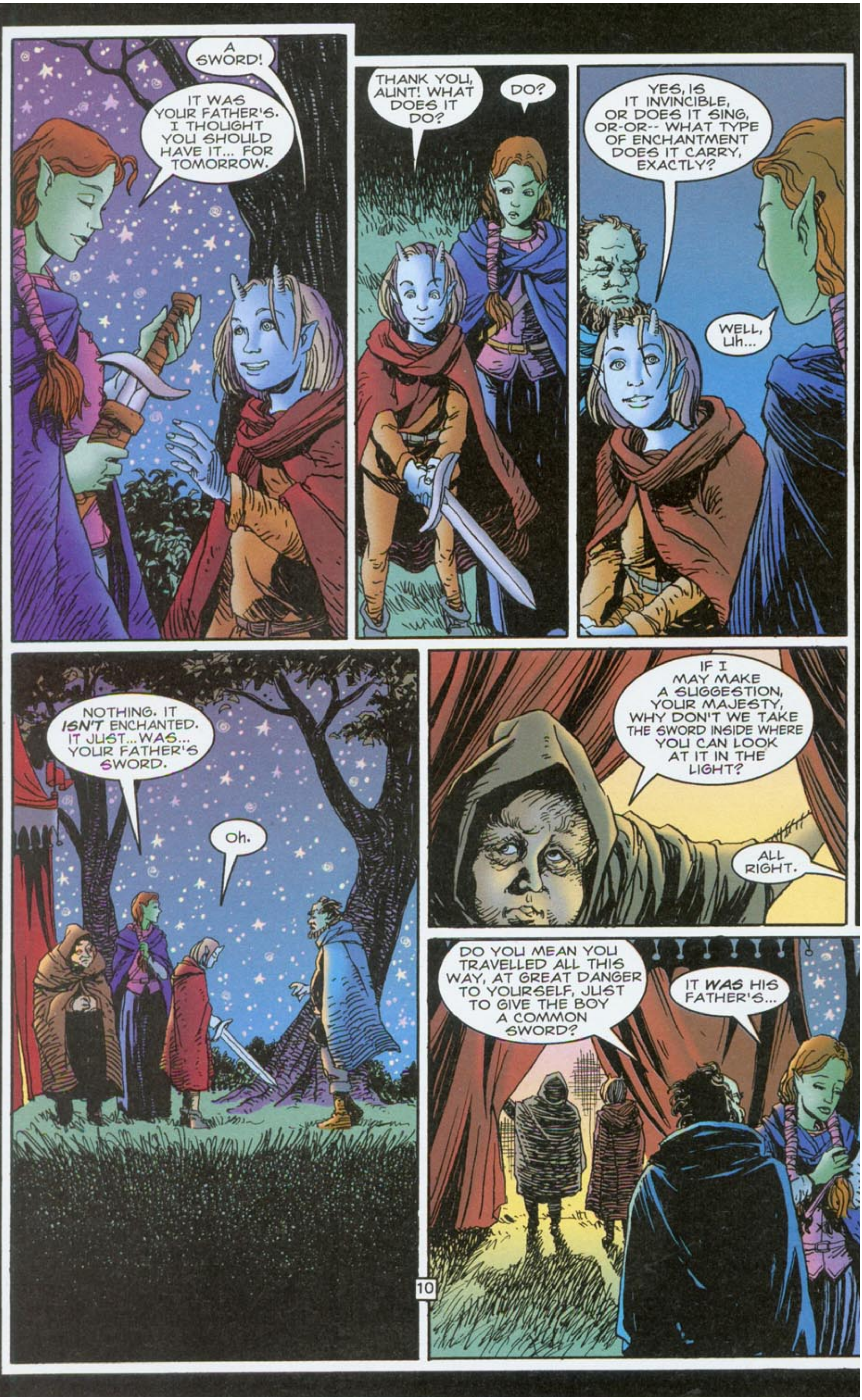

THANKS, FRIEND. BUT HAD I KNOWN WHEN I BEGAN THIS CAMPAIGN... WHEN I THOUGHT TO RIDE SOUTH WITH A LITTLE SHOW OF FORCE, AND PERSUADE THE COUNCIL TO MY PURPOSE --
-- I LITTLE THOUGHT MY COUSIN OF WINDAN WOULD MAKE CAUSE WITH THIS UPSTART AUBERON, AND LEAD ALL FAERIE INTO CIVIL WAR.
WUHL, TOMORRA' WILL DECIDE THE MATTER.
AYE, TOMORROW I'LL BE KING -- OR THE GREATEST **FOOL** ALIVE.
THEN YE SHALL BE ***KING FOOL,*** AN' YE'LL STILL BE THE KING O' ME AN' ALL MY LIKE!
STURM... YOU **DO** KNOW THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN DO FOR *"YOU AND YOUR LIKE,"* SHOULD WE LOSE?
WHAT D'YE MEAN, YUR MAJESTY?
I MEAN, IF WE SHOULD LOSE TOMORROW, WE'LL ***ALL*** BE ADJUDGED REBELS. AND YOU, GOOD FRIEND, SHALL STILL BE *"STURM THE TRAITOR,"* SUBJECT TO THE PENALTY OF DEATH.
THEN IT'S BETTER I DIE ON THE FIELD TOMORRA...
... DEFENDIN' THE ***RIGHTFUL KING.***

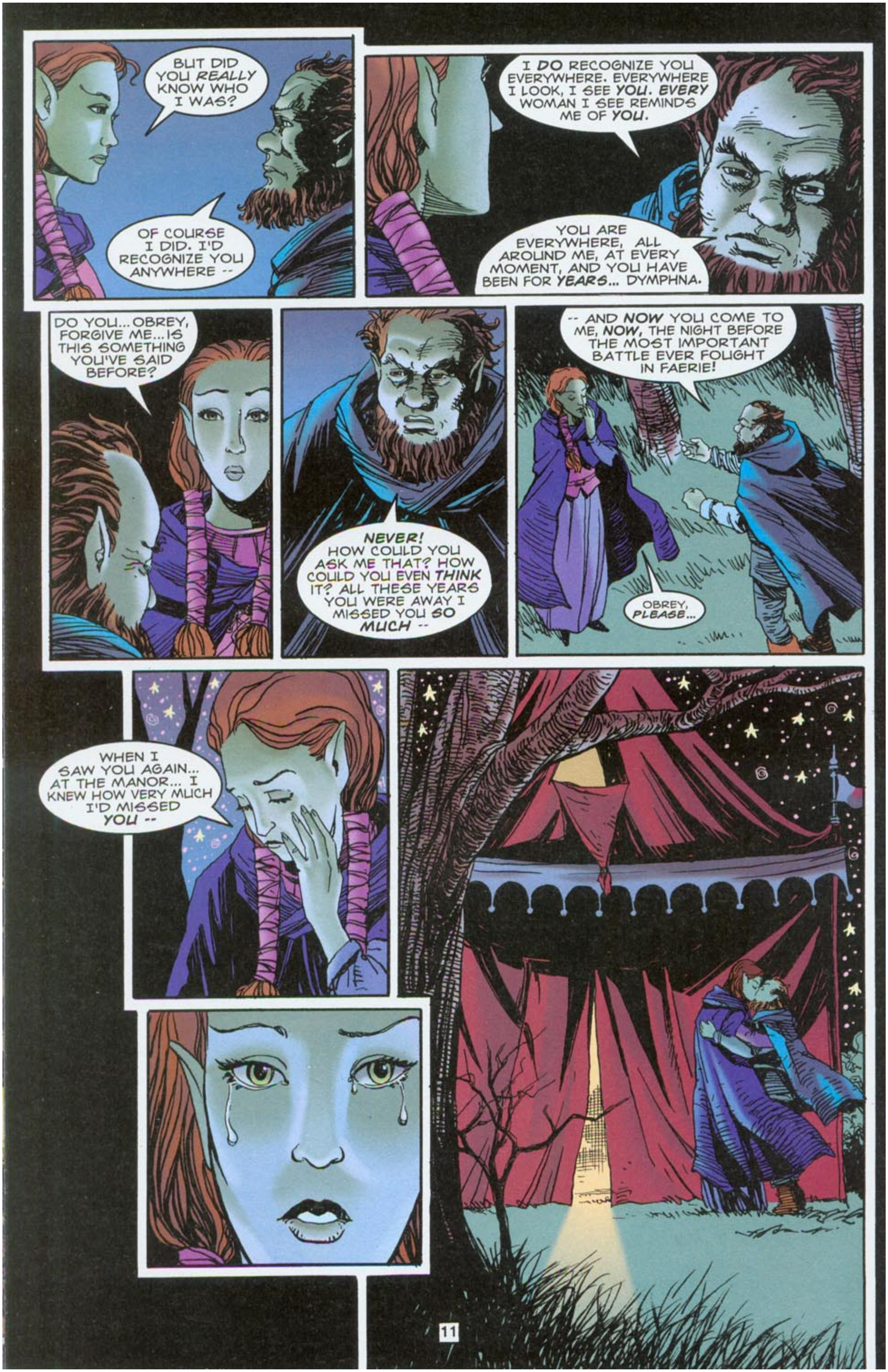

I SAW A MESSENGER COME FROM THE NORTH TODAY -- WERE IT NEWS FROM GRIMWAR?
INDEED -- THOUGH NOT AS GOOD AS YOUR NEWS OF OUR ENEMIES' FOUR-TO-ONE ADVANTAGE.
MY LADY IS WITH CHILD.
AWWWW, THAT'S FINE, FINE NEWS INDEED, THE HAPPIEST NEWS THAT EVER WAS HEARD IN FAERIE!
HOW SO?
SURELY YE REMEMBER THE ***PROPHECY***... AWW, I DISRECOLLECT THE WORDS OF IT, BUT ITS MEANIN' WERE THAT THE CHILDREN OF GRIMWAR SHALL RULE FAERIE UNTIL FAERIE CEASES TO BE!
YES, I'VE HEARD OF IT.
THEN, YUR LADY BEIN' WITH WHAT IS TO BE YUR FIRST CHILD, THE PROPHECY IS COME NIGH! AWW, WE MUS' WIN TOMORRA, SURELY!
WITH YUR PERMISSION, SIRR, I'LL GO AND MAKE THIS KNOWN. SURE, WE'RE CERTAIN TO WIN!
IF YOU THINK IT WILL HELP...
BUT BEWARE OF FAERIE PROPHECIES, MY FRIEND -- THEY MAY SAY WHAT THEY MEAN WITHOUT MEANING WHAT THEY SAY.

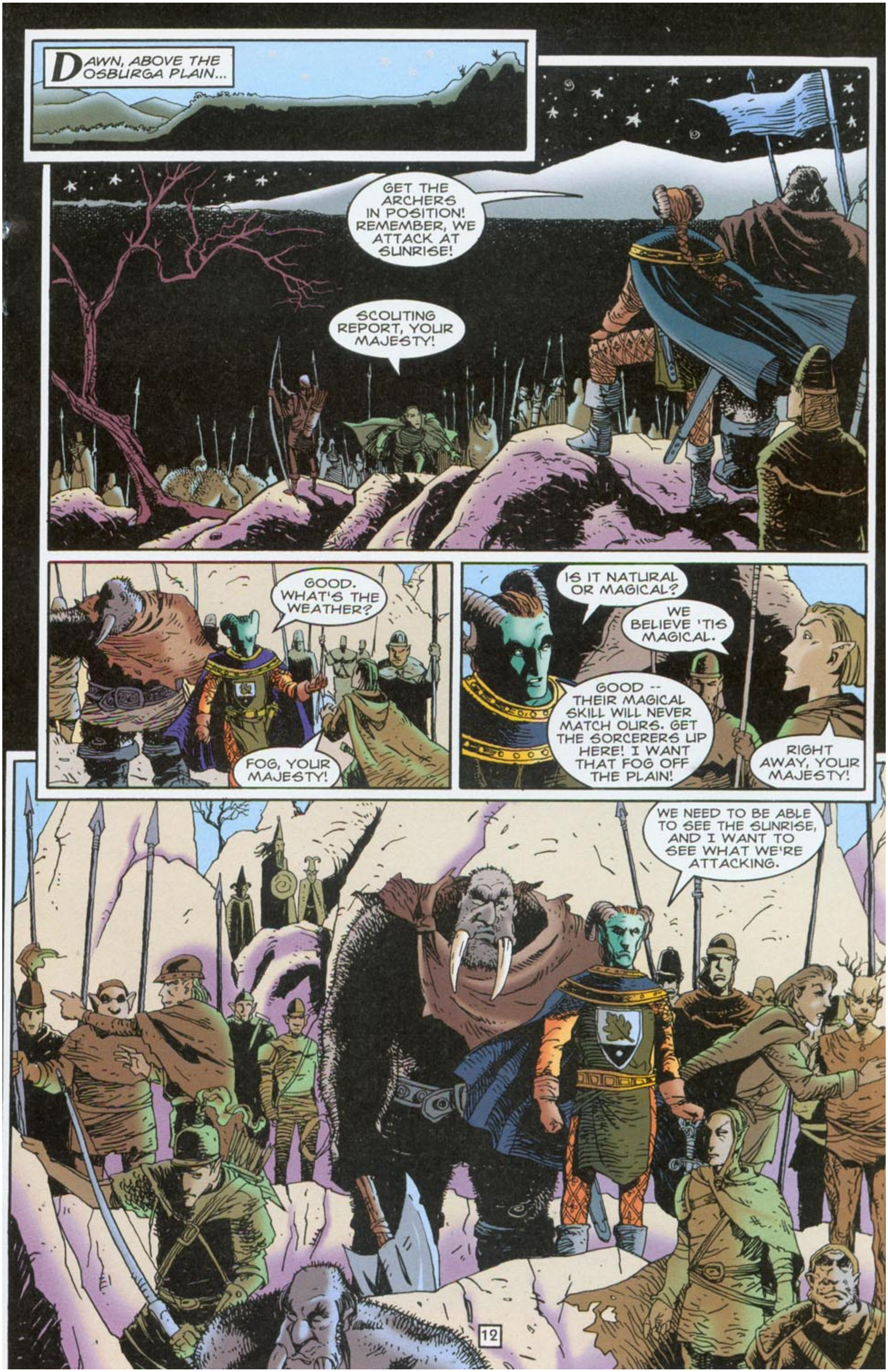

MEANWHILE, IN AUBERON'S CAMP AT THE EDGE OF THE PLAIN...
-- COULD HAVE SETTLED THIS MONTHS AGO!
WE COULD SETTLE **NAUGHT** TILL THEY LET US FIGHT.
I HEAR 'TWAS THE YOUNG PRINCELING WHO HELD US OFF.
KING AUBERON, YOU MEAN. HE'S THE **KING.** AND I'VE HEARD AS MUCH MYSELF.
HE'S OFFERED THE PRETENDER EVERY ACCOMMODATION.
SHORT OF MAKING **GRIMWAR** THE PRINCE REGENT.
HO! THAT'S A GOOD ONE.
HE **MIGHT** HAVE OFFERED THAT, HAD HE THOUGHT OF IT.
YE CANNOT COMPROMISE WITH REBELS.
TRUE -- THE HARD WAY'S THE **ONLY** WAY, WITH THEM.
NOW, NOW, HE MAY BE KING, BUT HE'S JUST A BOY. **OF COURSE** HE'S NOT LOOKING TO BATTLE HIS OWN COUSIN -- AND THE DUKE OF GRIMWAR, AT THAT.
HE'LL HAVE A BATTLE TOMORROW, WHETHER HE'S SEEKING **IT** OR NO.

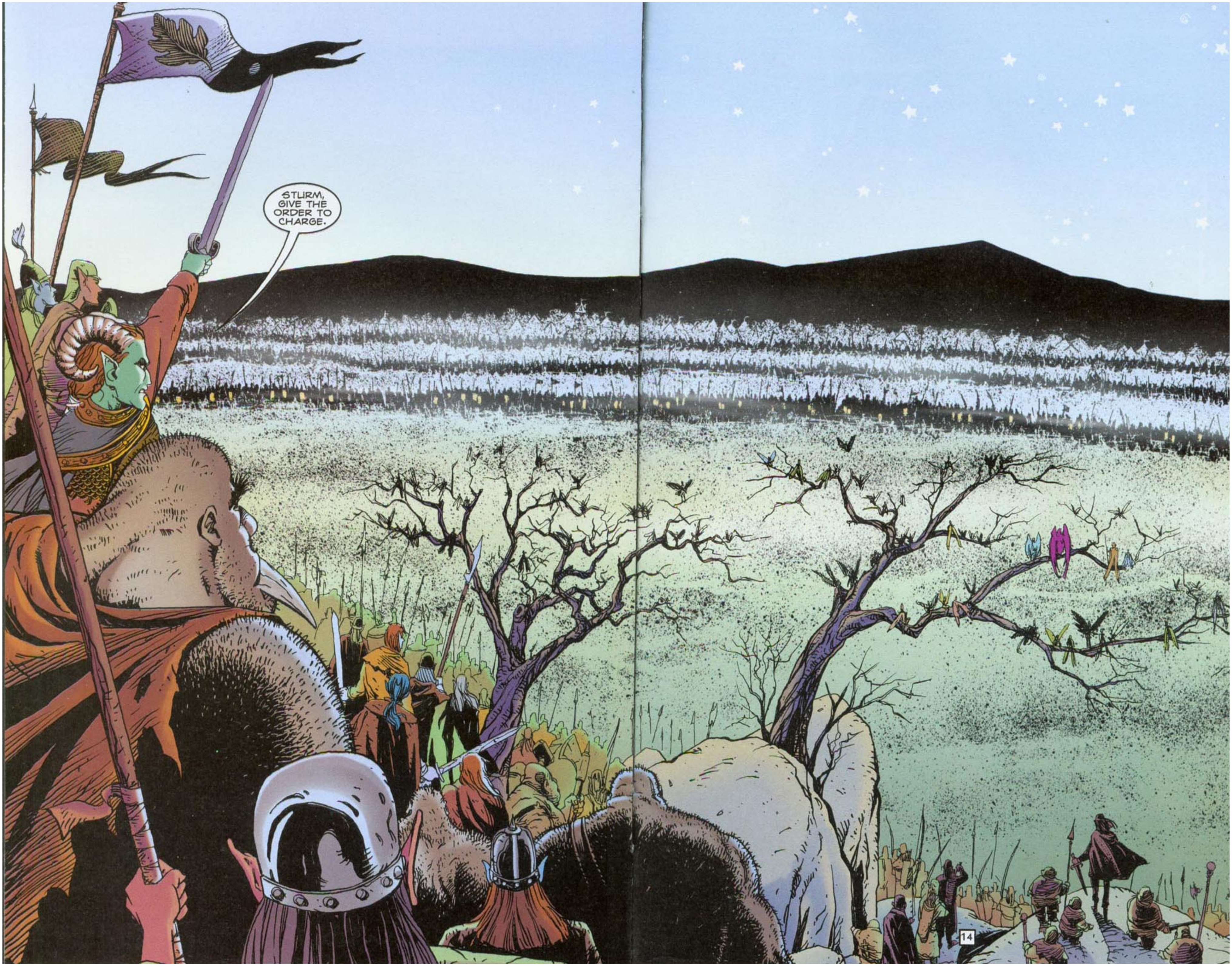

THOSE NORTHERNERS ARE BARBARIANS. MOST OF 'EM AREN'T EVEN FAERIES.
WELL, TOMORROW WE'LL SEND 'EM BACK NORTH. WILL YOU EAT YOUR ACORN STEW, OR SHALL I GIVE IT TO A TROLL?
BUT I'M NOT AFRAID TO FIGHT, COUSIN OBREY!
WHAT! ACORN STEW AGAIN?
NO, NO, OF COURSE NOT, BUT --
-- PLEASE, YOUR MAJESTY, TRY TO USE THE ROYAL "WE."
Oh, YES. BUT I -- WE -- JUST DON'T SEE THE SENSE IN GETTING ALL THESE SOLDIERS KILLED, AS LONG AS THERE'S SOME ALTERNATIVE.
IF OUR COUSIN OF GRIMWAR WERE AS SENSIBLE AS YOU, HE WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED YOUR OFFER OF AMNESTY AND GONE HOME LAST MONTH.
I WISH HE HAD!
Hmmm?
Achh... WE WISH HE HAD. BUT WE ARE NOT AFRAID TO FIGHT!
THOSE WHO KNOW YOU BEST WILL VOUCH YOU ARE NO COWARD, YOUR MAJESTY -- AND THERE'LL BE MANY A CHANCE TO PROVE IT, COME THE MORROW.

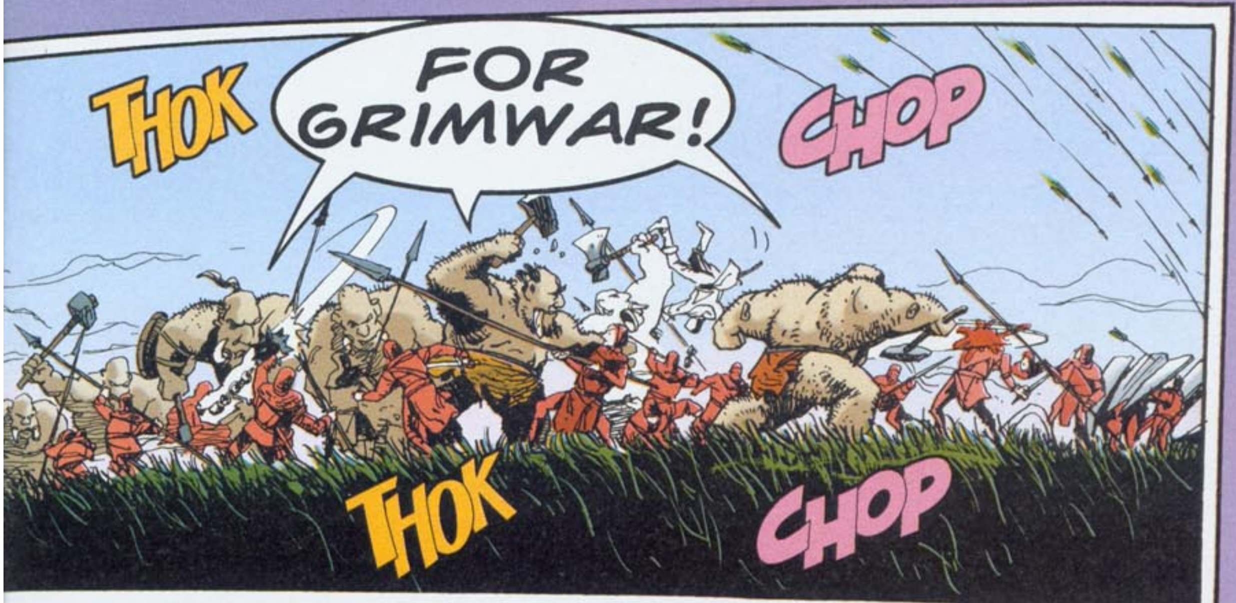

Hssst! YOUR MAJESTY!
WHO'S THERE?!
JUST TWO POOR OLD BROWNIE WOMEN, COME TO SEE THE KING.
WHAT? ARE YOU *MAD?* BE OFF WITH YOU BOTH, BEFORE I --
A-HA-HA HA! OBREY, IT'S *ME.*
AUNT DYMPHNA!
AND BRIDEY'S HERE WITH ME. DID YOU REALLY NOT KNOW?
WHAT? NO, NO, OF COURSE *I* RECOGNIZED YOU --
-- I MERELY PLAYED ALONG FOR THE SAKE OF SURPRISING THE KING.
BUT WHAT *ARE* YOU DOING HERE?
YES, AUNT -- WASN'T IT DANGEROUS FOR YOU TO COME HERE?
NOT AT ALL. BESIDES TRAVELING IN DISGUISE, I NEVER GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT... PROTECTION.
AND I HAD A VERY IMPORTANT REASON FOR COMING -- I WANTED TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING.

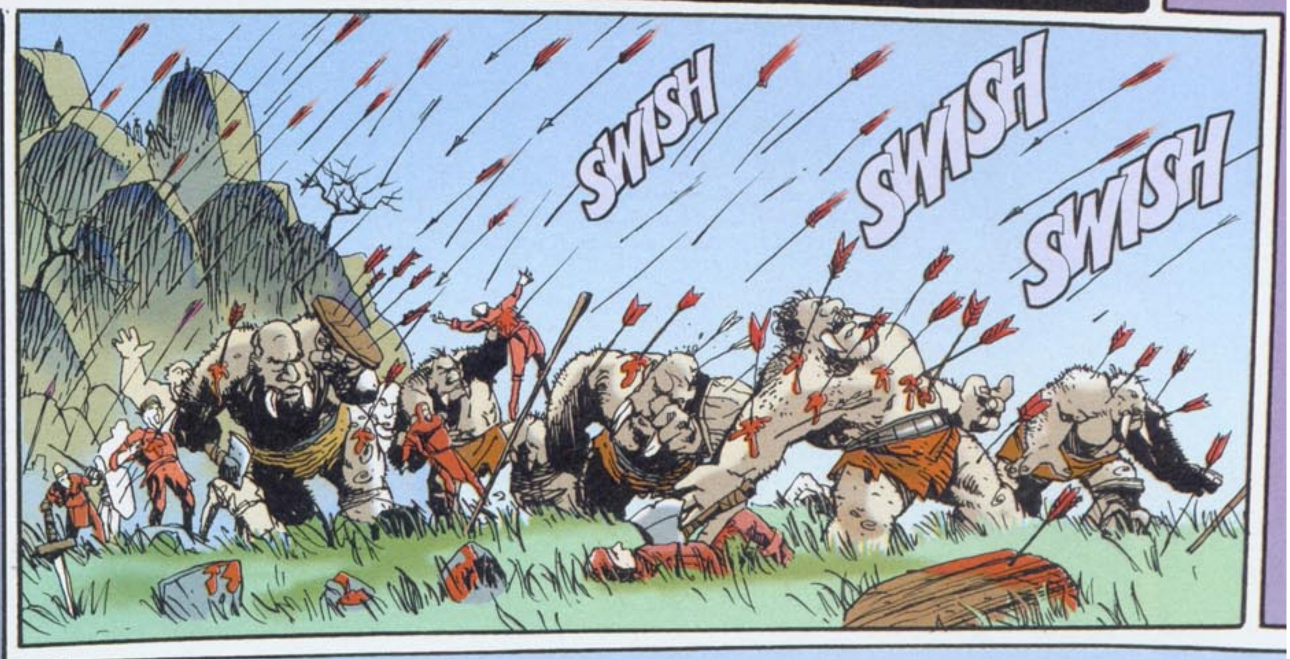

A SWORD!
IT WAS YOUR FATHER'S. I THOUGHT YOU SHOULD HAVE IT... FOR TOMORROW.
THANK YOU, AUNT! WHAT DOES IT DO?
DO?
YES, IS IT INVINCIBLE, OR DOES IT SING, OR-OR-- WHAT TYPE OF ENCHANTMENT DOES IT CARRY, EXACTLY?
WELL, UH...
NOTHING. IT *ISN'T* ENCHANTED. IT JUST...WAS... YOUR FATHER'S SWORD.
Oh.
IF I MAY MAKE A SUGGESTION, YOUR MAJESTY, WHY DON'T WE TAKE THE SWORD INSIDE WHERE YOU CAN LOOK AT IT IN THE LIGHT?
ALL RIGHT.
DO YOU MEAN YOU TRAVELLED ALL THIS WAY, AT GREAT DANGER TO YOURSELF, JUST TO GIVE THE BOY A COMMON SWORD?
IT *WAS* HIS FATHER'S...

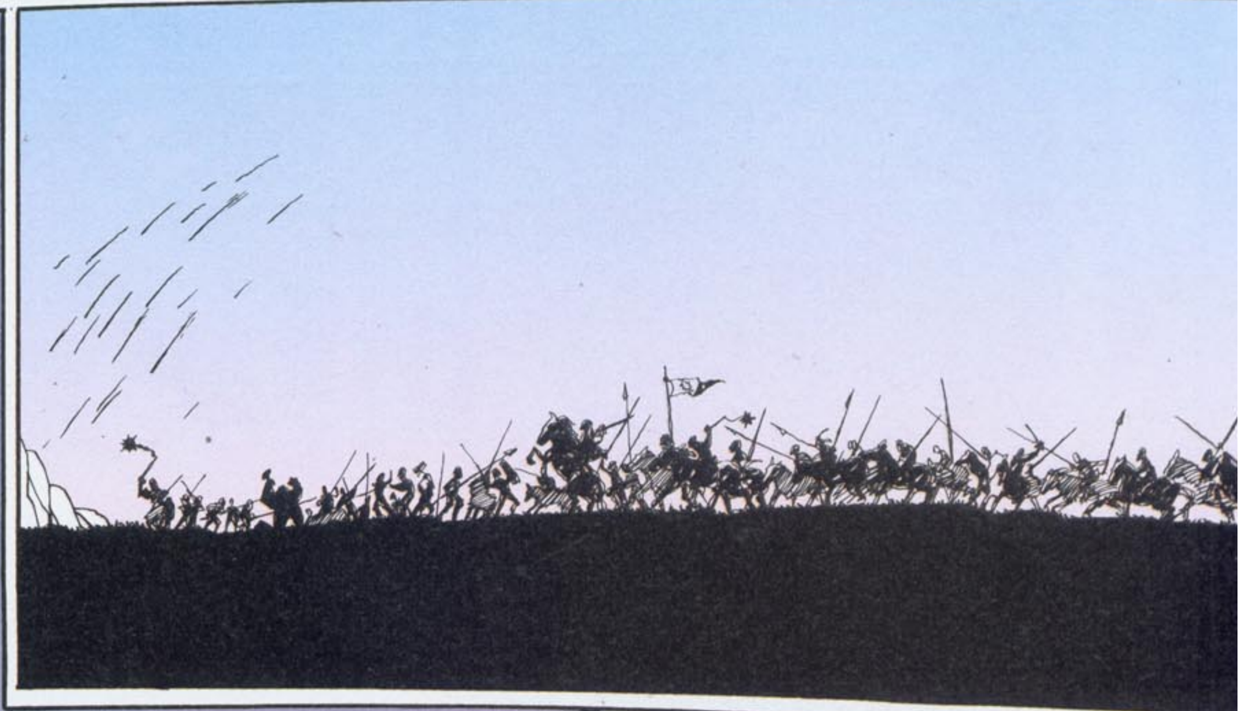

BUT DID YOU *REALLY* KNOW WHO I WAS?
OF COURSE I DID. I'D RECOGNIZE YOU ANYWHERE --
I *DO* RECOGNIZE YOU EVERYWHERE. EVERYWHERE I LOOK, I SEE *YOU*. *EVERY* WOMAN I SEE REMINDS ME OF *YOU*.
YOU ARE EVERYWHERE, ALL AROUND ME, AT EVERY MOMENT, AND YOU HAVE BEEN FOR *YEARS*... DYMPHNA.
DO YOU... OBREY, FORGIVE ME... IS THIS SOMETHING YOU'VE SAID BEFORE?
NEVER! HOW COULD YOU ASK ME THAT? HOW COULD YOU EVEN *THINK* IT? ALL THESE YEARS YOU WERE AWAY I MISSED YOU *SO MUCH* --
-- AND *NOW* YOU COME TO ME, *NOW*, THE NIGHT BEFORE THE MOST IMPORTANT BATTLE EVER FOUGHT IN FAERIE!
OBREY, *PLEASE*...
WHEN I SAW YOU AGAIN... AT THE MANOR... I KNEW HOW VERY MUCH I'D MISSED *YOU* --

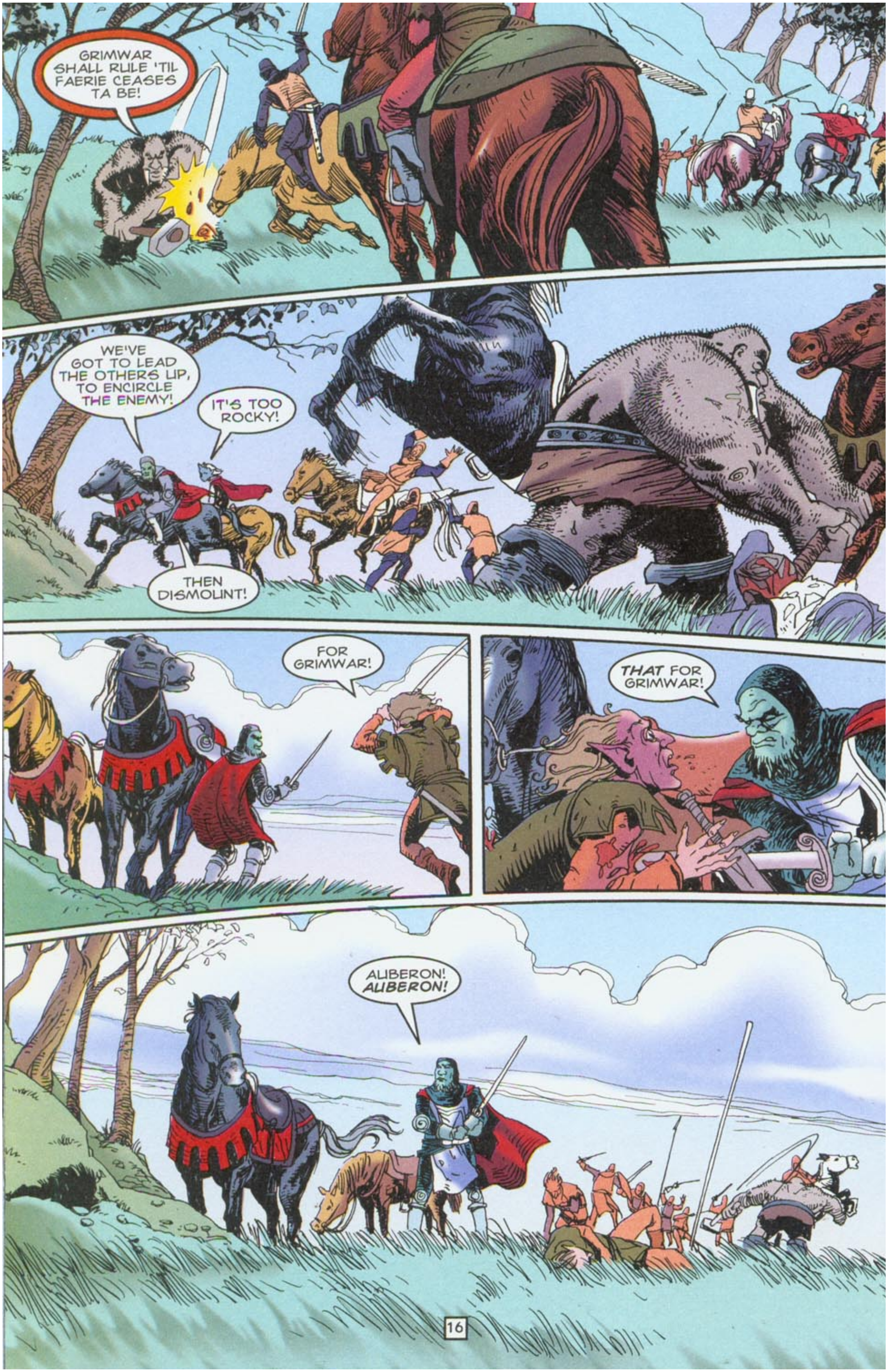

DAWN, ABOVE THE OSBURGA PLAIN...
GET THE ARCHERS IN POSITION! REMEMBER, WE ATTACK AT SUNRISE!
SCOUTING REPORT, YOUR MAJESTY!
GOOD. WHAT'S THE WEATHER?
FOG, YOUR MAJESTY!
IS IT NATURAL OR MAGICAL?
WE BELIEVE 'TIS MAGICAL.
GOOD -- THEIR MAGICAL SKILL WILL NEVER MATCH OURS. GET THE SORCERERS UP HERE! I WANT THAT FOG OFF THE PLAIN!
RIGHT AWAY, YOUR MAJESTY!
WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE SUNRISE, AND I WANT TO SEE WHAT WE'RE ATTACKING.

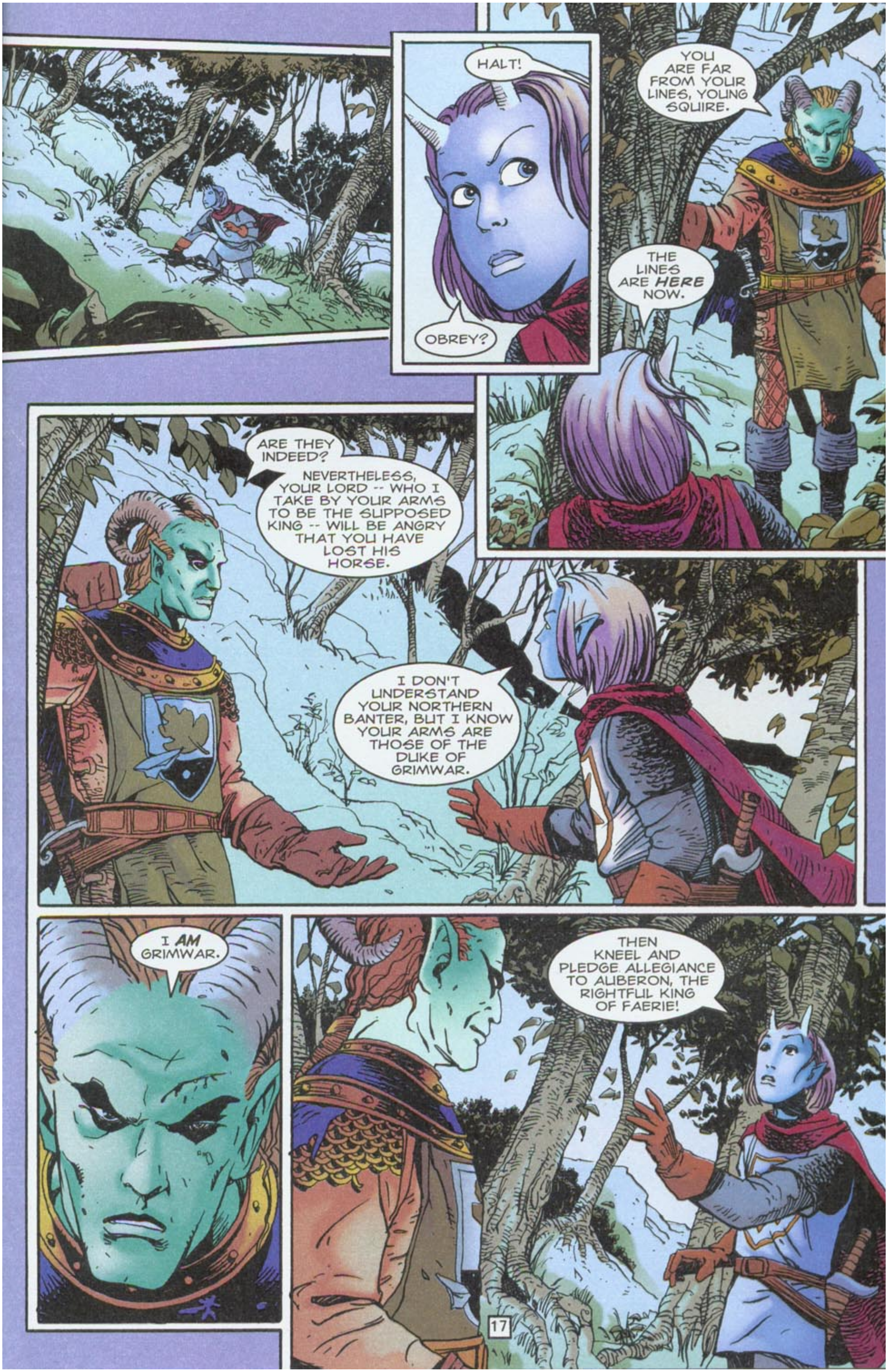

STURM, GIVE THE ORDER TO CHARGE.

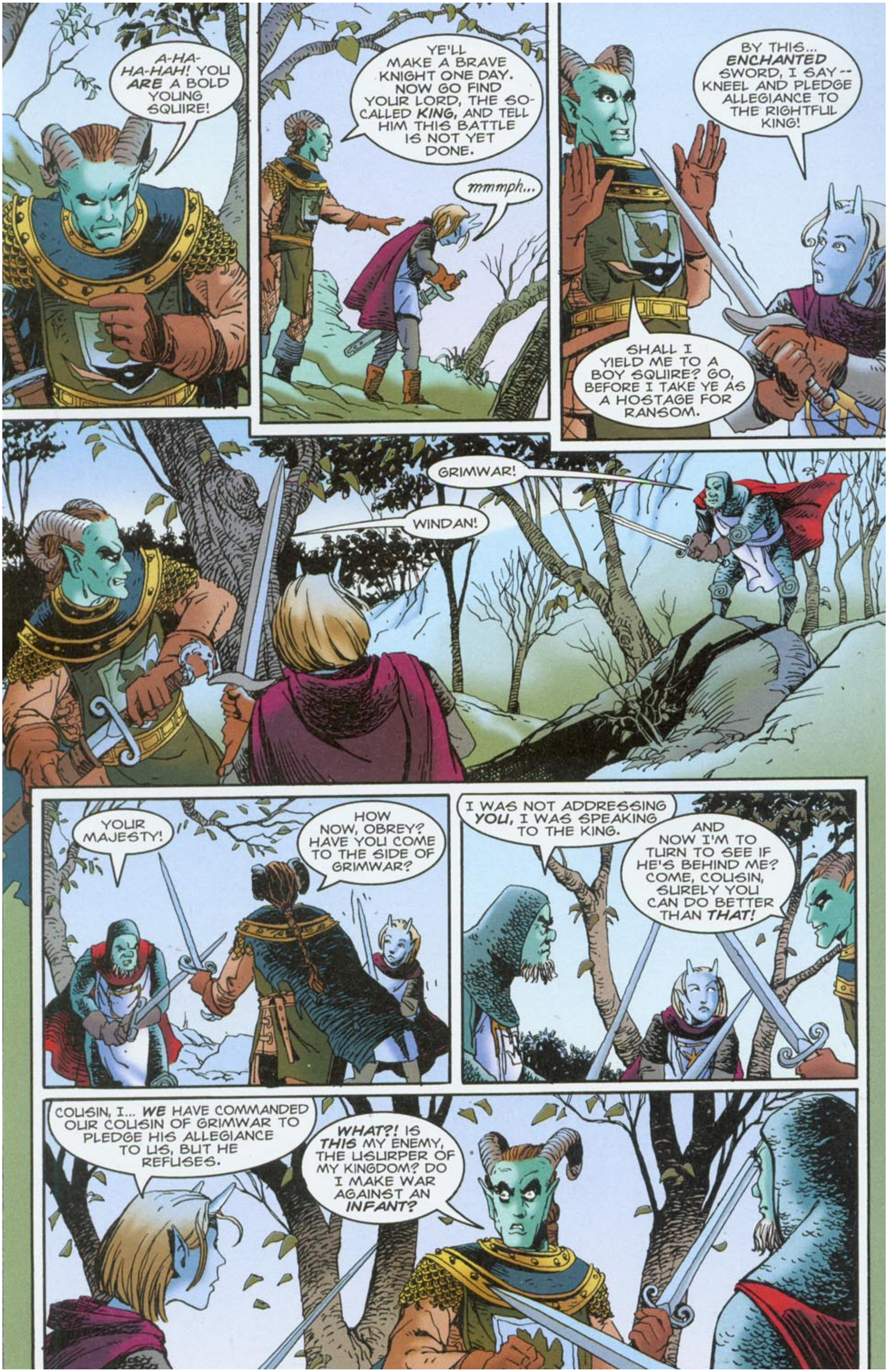

THOK
FOR GRIMWAR!
CHOP
THOK
CHOP

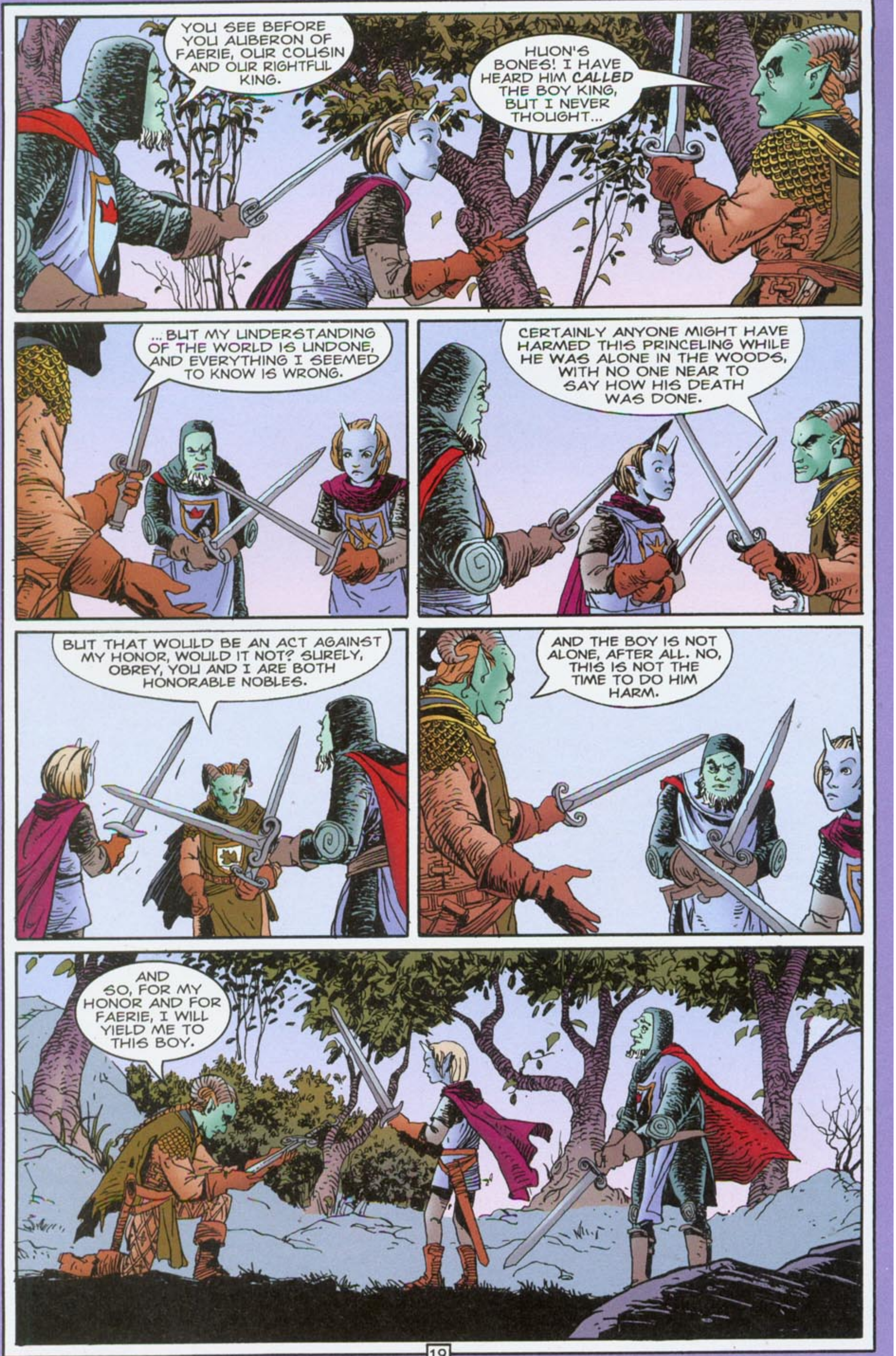

SWISH
SWISH
SWISH

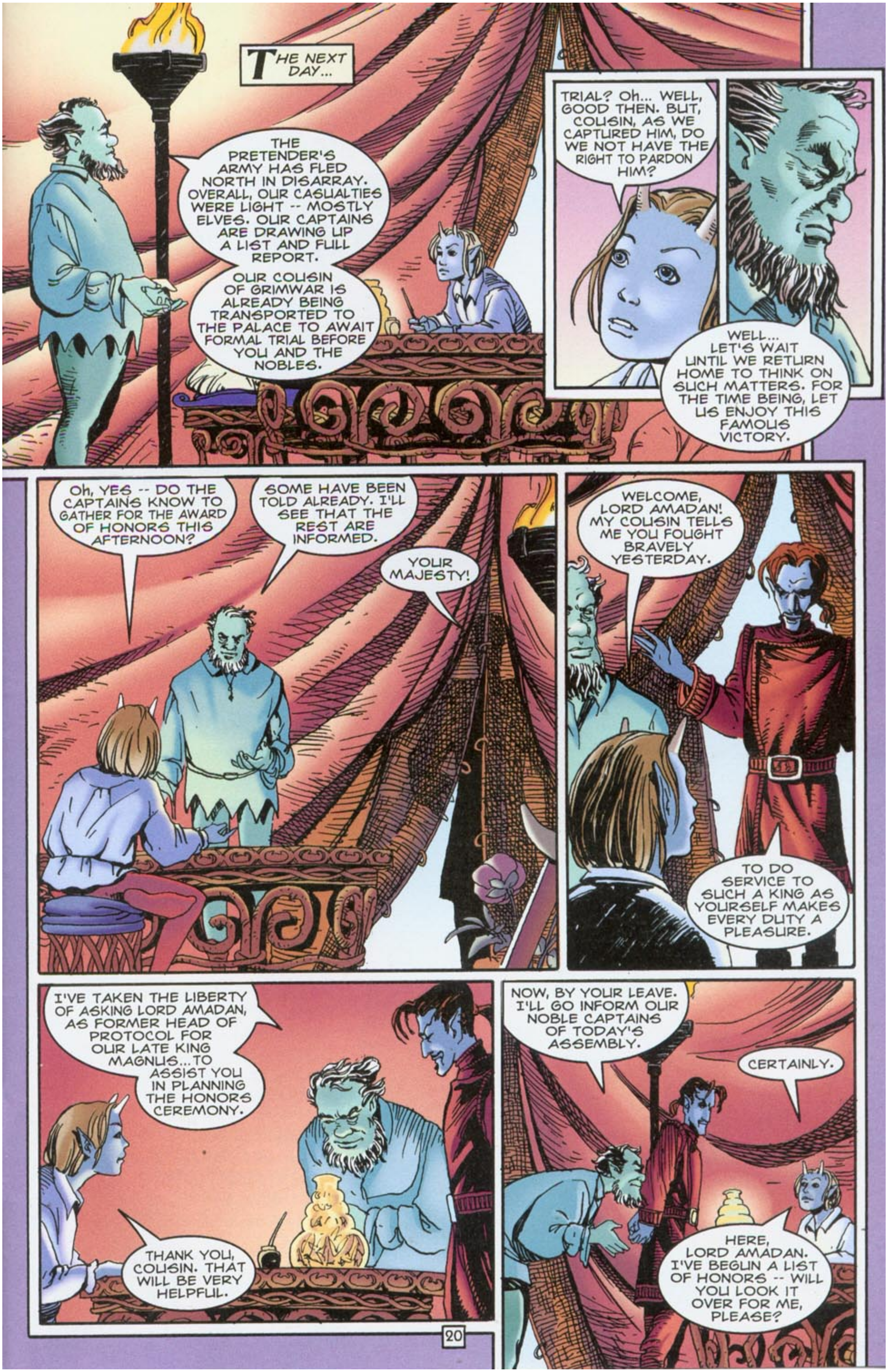


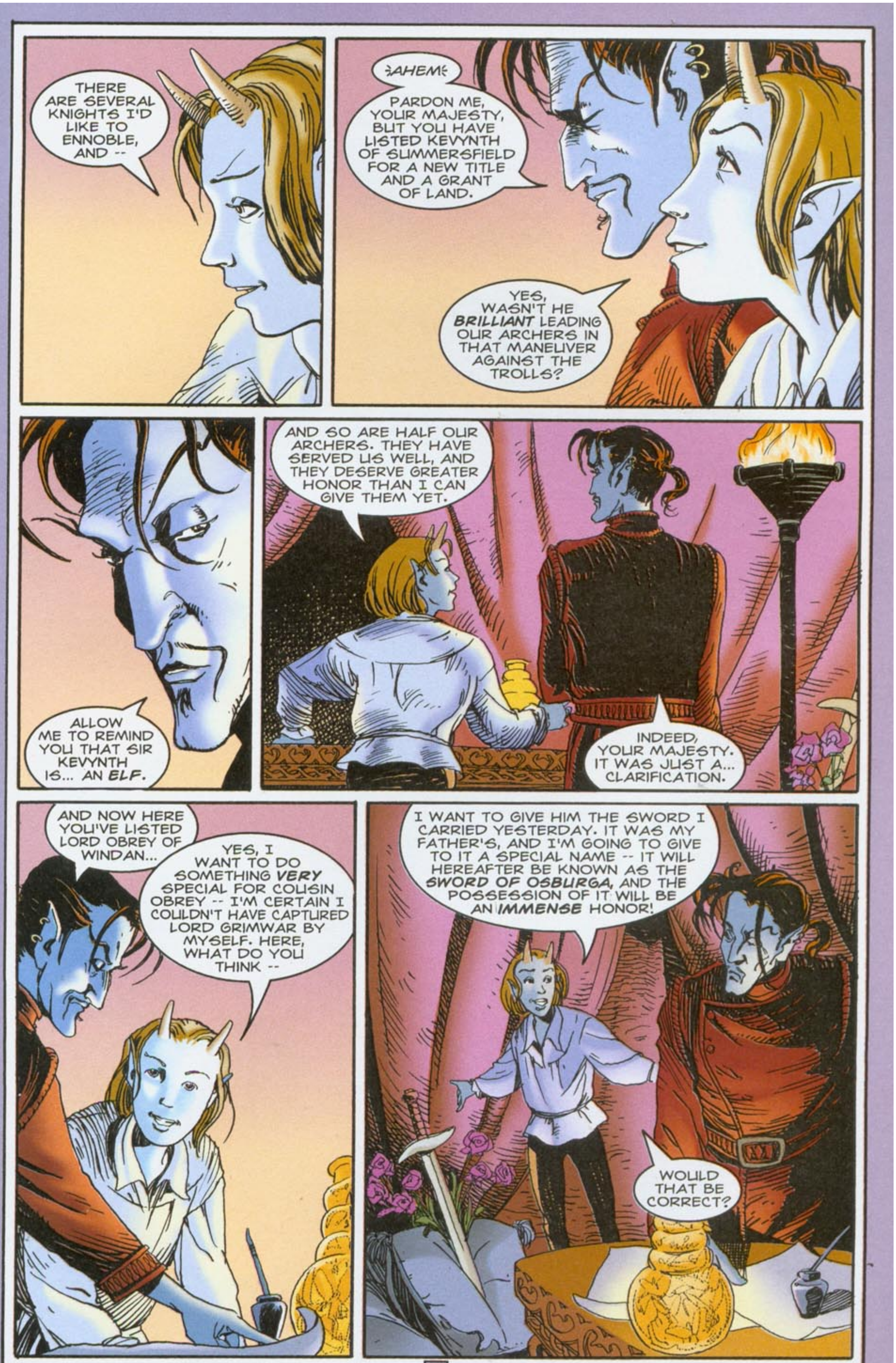

GRIMWAR SHALL RULE 'TIL FAERIE CEASES TA BE!
WE'VE GOT TO LEAD THE OTHERS UP, TO ENCIRCLE THE ENEMY!
IT'S TOO ROCKY!
THEN DISMOUNT!
FOR GRIMWAR!
THAT FOR GRIMWAR!
AUBERON! ***AUBERON!***

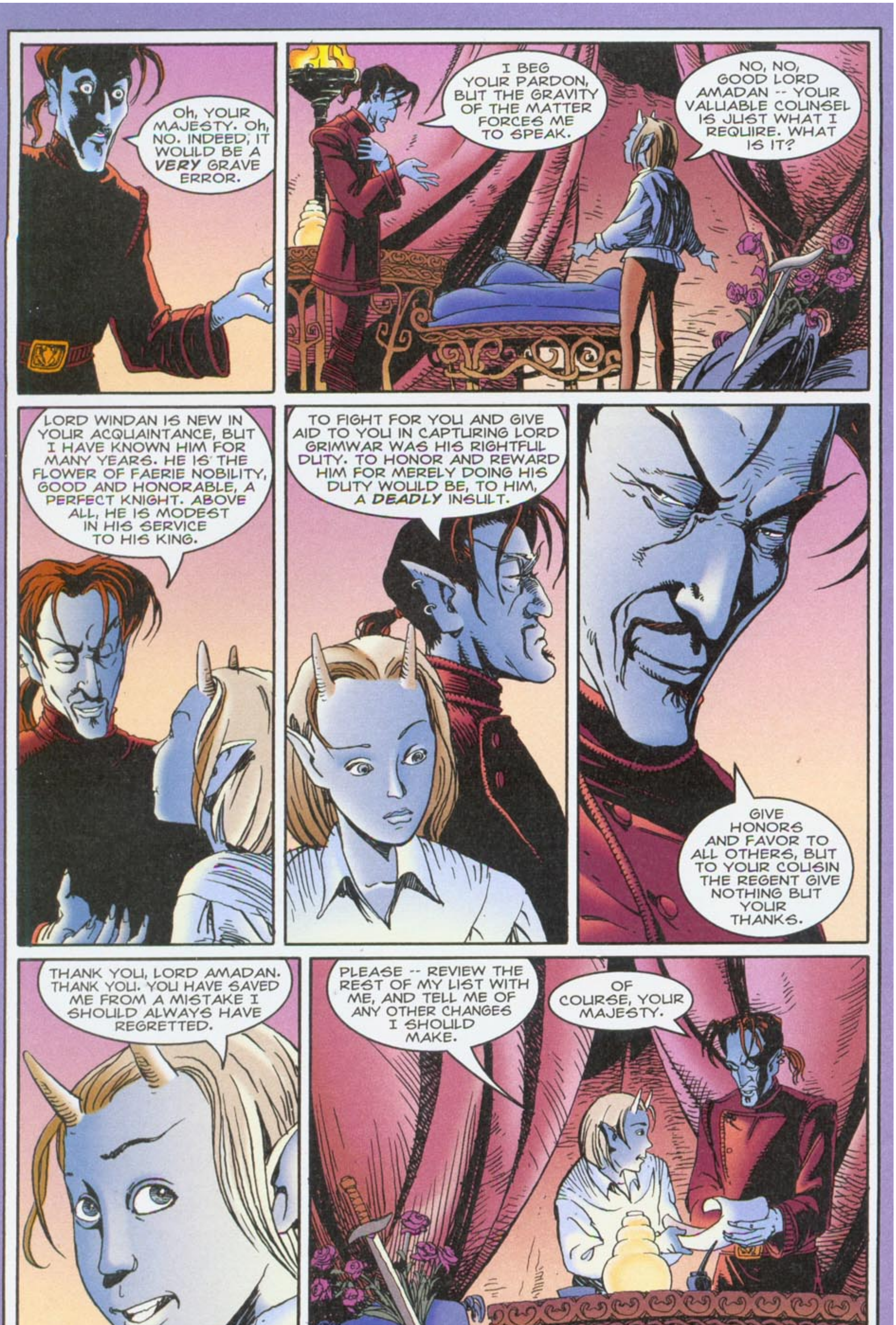

HALT!
OBREY?
YOU ARE FAR FROM YOUR LINES, YOUNG SQUIRE.
THE LINES ARE *HERE* NOW.
ARE THEY INDEED?
NEVERTHELESS, YOUR LORD -- WHO I TAKE BY YOUR ARMS TO BE THE SUPPOSED KING -- WILL BE ANGRY THAT YOU HAVE LOST HIS HORSE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR NORTHERN BANTER, BUT I KNOW YOUR ARMS ARE THOSE OF THE DUKE OF GRIMWAR.
I *AM* GRIMWAR.
THEN KNEEL AND PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO AUBERON, THE RIGHTFUL KING OF FAERIE!

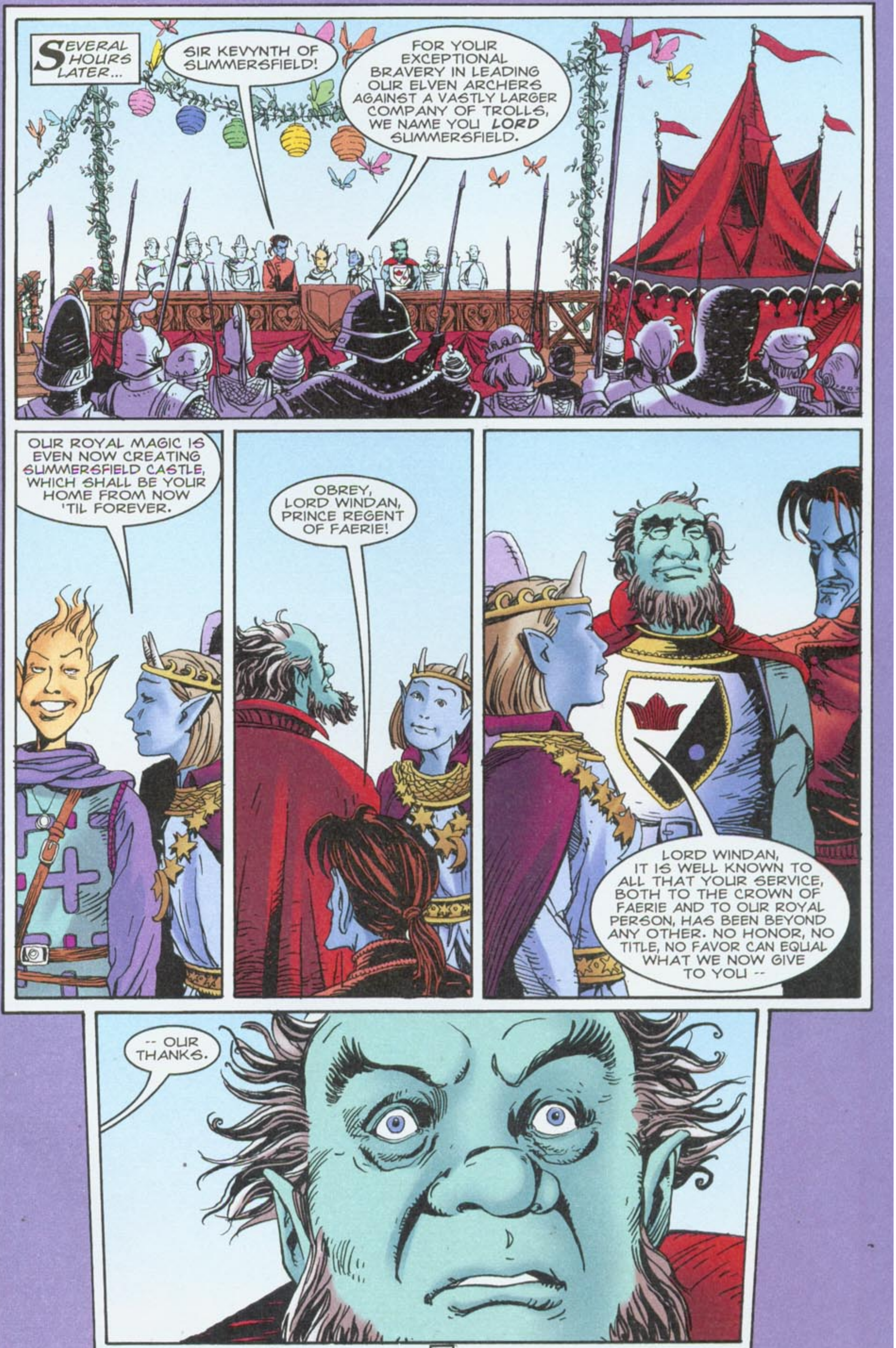

A-HA-HA-HAH! YOU *ARE* A BOLD YOUNG SQUIRE!
YE'LL MAKE A BRAVE KNIGHT ONE DAY. NOW GO FIND YOUR LORD, THE SO-CALLED *KING*, AND TELL HIM THIS BATTLE IS NOT YET DONE.
mmmph...
BY THIS... *ENCHANTED* SWORD, I SAY -- KNEEL AND PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE RIGHTFUL KING!
SHALL I YIELD ME TO A BOY SQUIRE? GO, BEFORE I TAKE YE AS A HOSTAGE FOR RANSOM.
GRIMWAR!
WINDAN!
YOUR MAJESTY!
HOW NOW, OBREY? HAVE YOU COME TO THE SIDE OF GRIMWAR?
I WAS NOT ADDRESSING *YOU*, I WAS SPEAKING TO THE KING.
AND NOW I'M TO TURN TO SEE IF HE'S BEHIND ME? COME, COUSIN, SURELY YOU CAN DO BETTER THAN *THAT!*
COUSIN, I... *WE* HAVE COMMANDED OUR COUSIN OF GRIMWAR TO PLEDGE HIS ALLEGIANCE TO US, BUT HE REFUSES.
WHAT?! IS *THIS* MY ENEMY, THE USURPER OF MY KINGDOM? DO I MAKE WAR AGAINST AN *INFANT?*

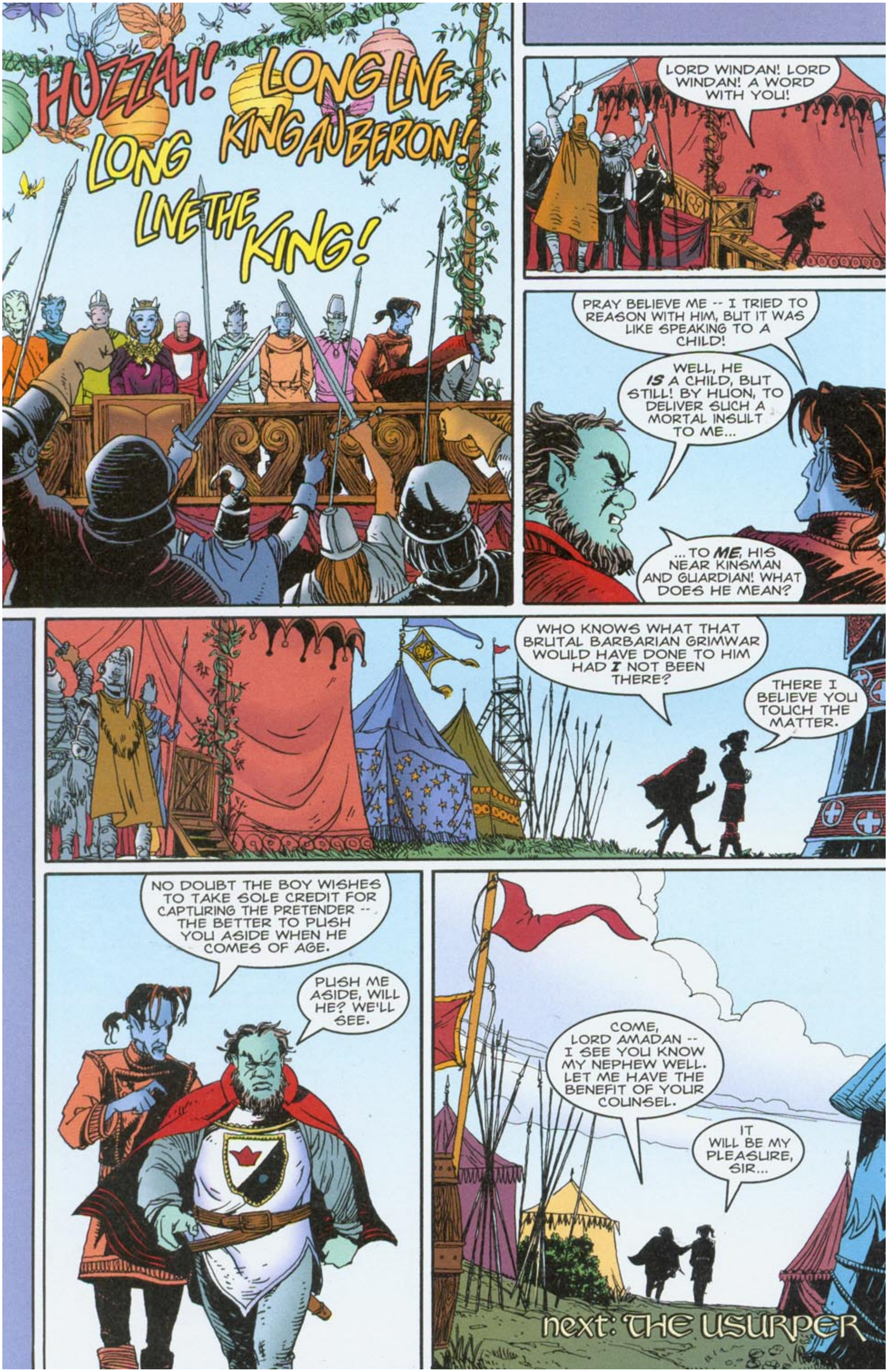

YOU SEE BEFORE YOU AUBERON OF FAERIE, OUR COUSIN AND OUR RIGHTFUL KING.
HUON'S BONES! I HAVE HEARD HIM *CALLED* THE BOY KING, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT...
...BUT MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD IS UNDONE, AND EVERYTHING I SEEMED TO KNOW IS WRONG.
CERTAINLY ANYONE MIGHT HAVE HARMED THIS PRINCELING WHILE HE WAS ALONE IN THE WOODS, WITH NO ONE NEAR TO SAY HOW HIS DEATH WAS DONE.
BUT THAT WOULD BE AN ACT AGAINST MY HONOR, WOULD IT NOT? SURELY, OBREY, YOU AND I ARE BOTH HONORABLE NOBLES.
AND THE BOY IS NOT ALONE, AFTER ALL. NO, THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO DO HIM HARM.
AND SO, FOR MY HONOR AND FOR FAERIE, I WILL YIELD ME TO THIS BOY.


THE NEXT DAY...
THE PRETENDER'S ARMY HAS FLED NORTH IN DISARRAY. OVERALL, OUR CASUALTIES WERE LIGHT -- MOSTLY ELVES. OUR CAPTAINS ARE DRAWING UP A LIST AND FULL REPORT.
OUR COUSIN OF GRIMWAR IS ALREADY BEING TRANSPORTED TO THE PALACE TO AWAIT FORMAL TRIAL BEFORE YOU AND THE NOBLES.
TRIAL? Oh... WELL, GOOD THEN. BUT, COUSIN, AS WE CAPTURED HIM, DO WE NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARDON HIM?
WELL... LET'S WAIT UNTIL WE RETURN HOME TO THINK ON SUCH MATTERS. FOR THE TIME BEING, LET US ENJOY THIS FAMOUS VICTORY.
Oh, YES -- DO THE CAPTAINS KNOW TO GATHER FOR THE AWARD OF HONORS THIS AFTERNOON?
SOME HAVE BEEN TOLD ALREADY. I'LL SEE THAT THE REST ARE INFORMED.
YOUR MAJESTY!
WELCOME, LORD AMADAN! MY COUSIN TELLS ME YOU FOUGHT BRAVELY YESTERDAY.
TO DO SERVICE TO SUCH A KING AS YOURSELF MAKES EVERY DUTY A PLEASURE.
I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF ASKING LORD AMADAN, AS FORMER HEAD OF PROTOCOL FOR OUR LATE KING MAGNUS...TO ASSIST YOU IN PLANNING THE HONORS CEREMONY.
THANK YOU, COUSIN. THAT WILL BE VERY HELPFUL.
NOW, BY YOUR LEAVE. I'LL GO INFORM OUR NOBLE CAPTAINS OF TODAY'S ASSEMBLY.
CERTAINLY.
HERE, LORD AMADAN. I'VE BEGUN A LIST OF HONORS -- WILL YOU LOOK IT OVER FOR ME, PLEASE?


THERE ARE SEVERAL KNIGHTS I'D LIKE TO ENNOBLE, AND --
AHEM
PARDON ME, YOUR MAJESTY, BUT YOU HAVE LISTED KEVYNTH OF SUMMERSFIELD FOR A NEW TITLE AND A GRANT OF LAND.
YES, WASN'T HE **BRILLIANT** LEADING OUR ARCHERS IN THAT MANEUVER AGAINST THE TROLLS?
ALLOW ME TO REMIND YOU THAT SIR KEVYNTH IS... AN **ELF**.
AND SO ARE HALF OUR ARCHERS. THEY HAVE SERVED US WELL, AND THEY DESERVE GREATER HONOR THAN I CAN GIVE THEM YET.
INDEED, YOUR MAJESTY. IT WAS JUST A... CLARIFICATION.
AND NOW HERE YOU'VE LISTED LORD OBREY OF WINDAN...
YES, I WANT TO DO SOMETHING **VERY** SPECIAL FOR COUSIN OBREY -- I'M CERTAIN I COULDN'T HAVE CAPTURED LORD GRIMWAR BY MYSELF. HERE, WHAT DO YOU THINK --
I WANT TO GIVE HIM THE SWORD I CARRIED YESTERDAY. IT WAS MY FATHER'S, AND I'M GOING TO GIVE TO IT A SPECIAL NAME -- IT WILL HEREAFTER BE KNOWN AS THE **SWORD OF OSBURGA**, AND THE POSSESSION OF IT WILL BE AN **IMMENSE** HONOR!
WOULD THAT BE CORRECT?


Oh, YOUR MAJESTY. Oh, NO. INDEED, IT WOULD BE A *VERY* GRAVE ERROR.
I BEG YOUR PARDON, BUT THE GRAVITY OF THE MATTER FORCES ME TO SPEAK.
NO, NO, GOOD LORD AMADAN -- YOUR VALUABLE COUNSEL IS JUST WHAT I REQUIRE. WHAT IS IT?
LORD WINDAN IS NEW IN YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, BUT I HAVE KNOWN HIM FOR MANY YEARS. HE IS THE FLOWER OF FAERIE NOBILITY, GOOD AND HONORABLE, A PERFECT KNIGHT. ABOVE ALL, HE IS MODEST IN HIS SERVICE TO HIS KING.
TO FIGHT FOR YOU AND GIVE AID TO YOU IN CAPTURING LORD GRIMWAR WAS HIS RIGHTFUL DUTY. TO HONOR AND REWARD HIM FOR MERELY DOING HIS DUTY WOULD BE, TO HIM, A *DEADLY* INSULT.
GIVE HONORS AND FAVOR TO ALL OTHERS, BUT TO YOUR COUSIN THE REGENT GIVE NOTHING BUT YOUR THANKS.
THANK YOU, LORD AMADAN. THANK YOU. YOU HAVE SAVED ME FROM A MISTAKE I SHOULD ALWAYS HAVE REGRETTED.
PLEASE -- REVIEW THE REST OF MY LIST WITH ME, AND TELL ME OF ANY OTHER CHANGES I SHOULD MAKE.
OF COURSE, YOUR MAJESTY.


SEVERAL HOURS LATER...
SIR KEVYNTH OF SUMMERSFIELD!
FOR YOUR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY IN LEADING OUR ELVEN ARCHERS AGAINST A VASTLY LARGER COMPANY OF TROLLS, WE NAME YOU *LORD* SUMMERSFIELD.
OUR ROYAL MAGIC IS EVEN NOW CREATING SUMMERSFIELD CASTLE, WHICH SHALL BE YOUR HOME FROM NOW 'TIL FOREVER.
OBREY, LORD WINDAN, PRINCE REGENT OF FAERIE!
LORD WINDAN, IT IS WELL KNOWN TO ALL THAT YOUR SERVICE, BOTH TO THE CROWN OF FAERIE AND TO OUR ROYAL PERSON, HAS BEEN BEYOND ANY OTHER. NO HONOR, NO TITLE, NO FAVOR CAN EQUAL WHAT WE NOW GIVE TO YOU --
-- OUR THANKS.


HUZZAH! LONG LIVE LONG LIVE KING AUBERON! LIVE THE KING!
LORD WINDAN! LORD WINDAN! A WORD WITH YOU!
PRAY BELIEVE ME -- I TRIED TO REASON WITH HIM, BUT IT WAS LIKE SPEAKING TO A CHILD!
WELL, HE *IS* A CHILD, BUT STILL! BY HUON, TO DELIVER SUCH A MORTAL INSULT TO ME...
...TO *ME*, HIS NEAR KINSMAN AND GUARDIAN! WHAT DOES HE MEAN?
WHO KNOWS WHAT THAT BRUTAL BARBARIAN GRIMWAR WOULD HAVE DONE TO HIM HAD *I* NOT BEEN THERE?
THERE I BELIEVE YOU TOUCH THE MATTER.
NO DOUBT THE BOY WISHES TO TAKE SOLE CREDIT FOR CAPTURING THE PRETENDER -- THE BETTER TO PUSH YOU ASIDE WHEN HE COMES OF AGE.
PUSH ME ASIDE, WILL HE? WE'LL SEE.
COME, LORD AMADAN -- I SEE YOU KNOW MY NEPHEW WELL. LET ME HAVE THE BENEFIT OF YOUR COUNSEL.
IT WILL BE MY PLEASURE, SIR...
next: THE USURPER

VERTIGO
DC COMICS

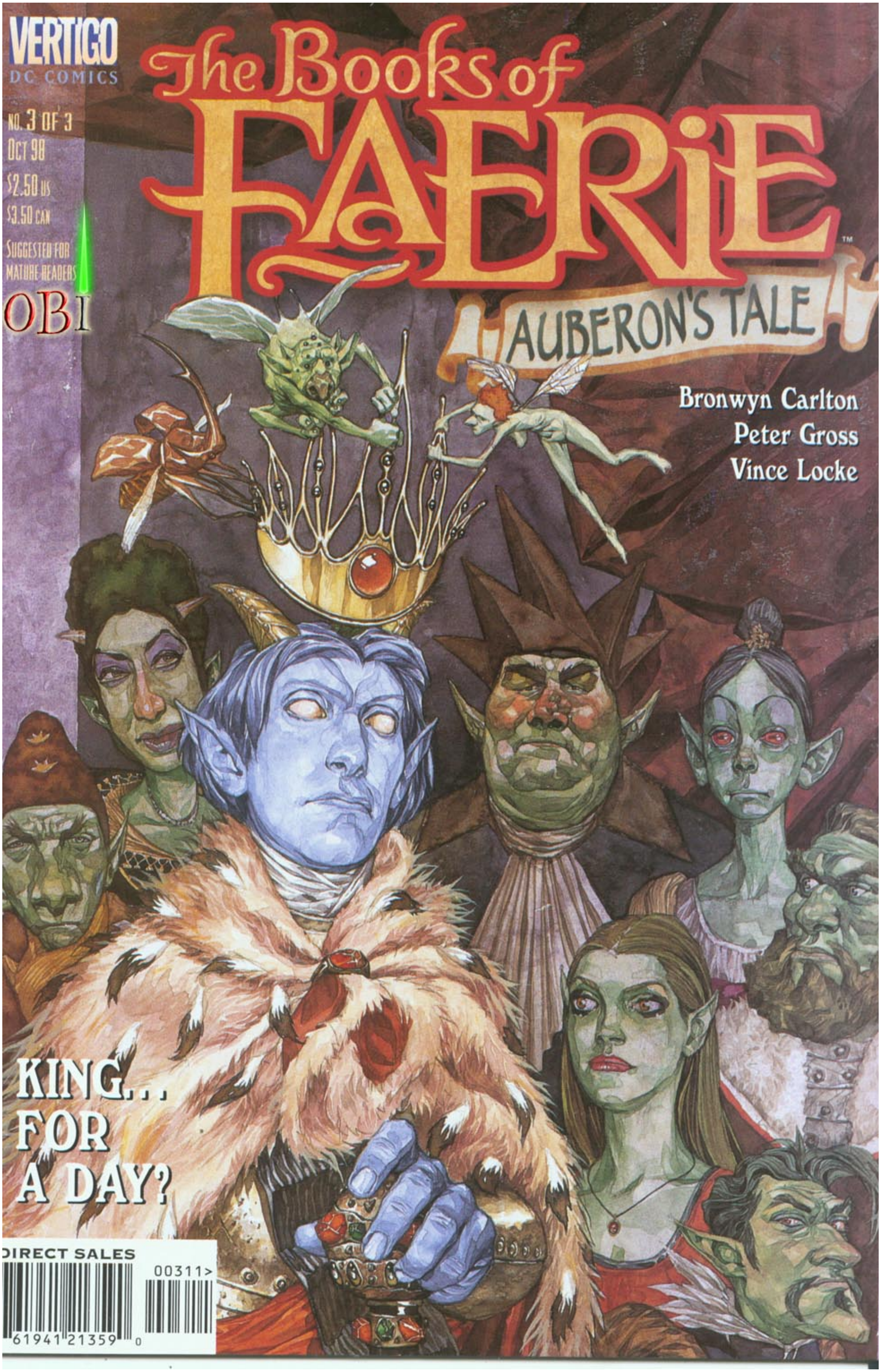
The Books of FAERIE™

AUBERON'S TALE

No. 3 OF 3
Oct 98
$2.50 US
$3.50 CAN
Suggested for mature readers

OBI

Bronwyn Carlton
Peter Gross
Vince Locke



KING...
FOR
A DAY?

DIRECT SALES
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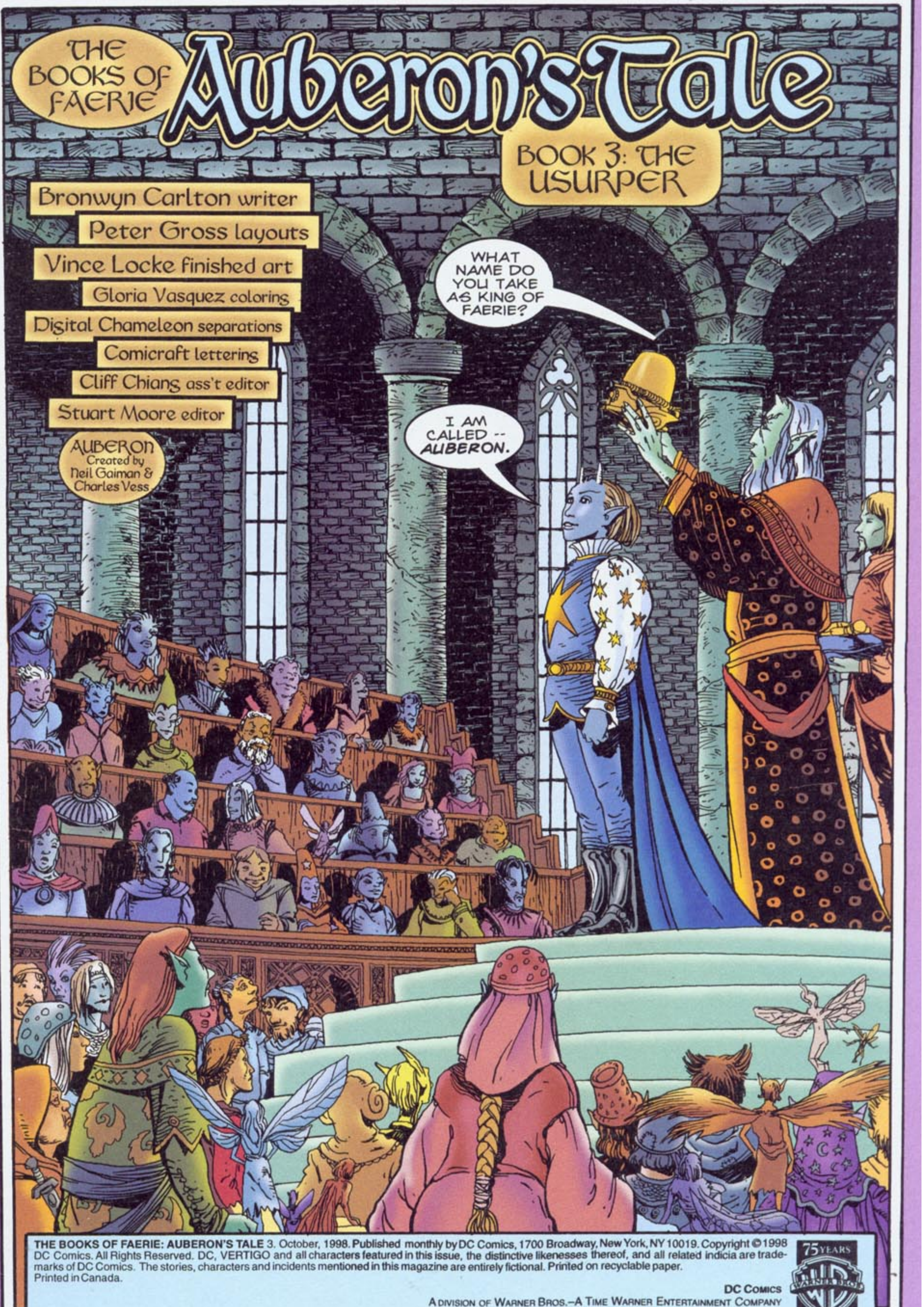
THE BOOKS OF FAERIE
Auberon's Tale
BOOK 3: THE USURPER
Bronwyn Carlton writer
Peter Gross layouts
Vince Locke finished art
Gloria Vasquez coloring
Digital Chameleon separations
Comicraft lettering
Cliff Chiang ass't editor
Stuart Moore editor
AUBERON Created by Neil Gaiman & Charles Vess
WHAT NAME DO YOU TAKE AS KING OF FAERIE?
I AM CALLED -- *AUBERON.*

THE BOOKS OF FAERIE: AUBERON'S TALE 3. October, 1998. Published monthly by DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. Copyright © 1998 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. DC, VERTIGO and all characters featured in this issue, the distinctive likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. Printed on recyclable paper.
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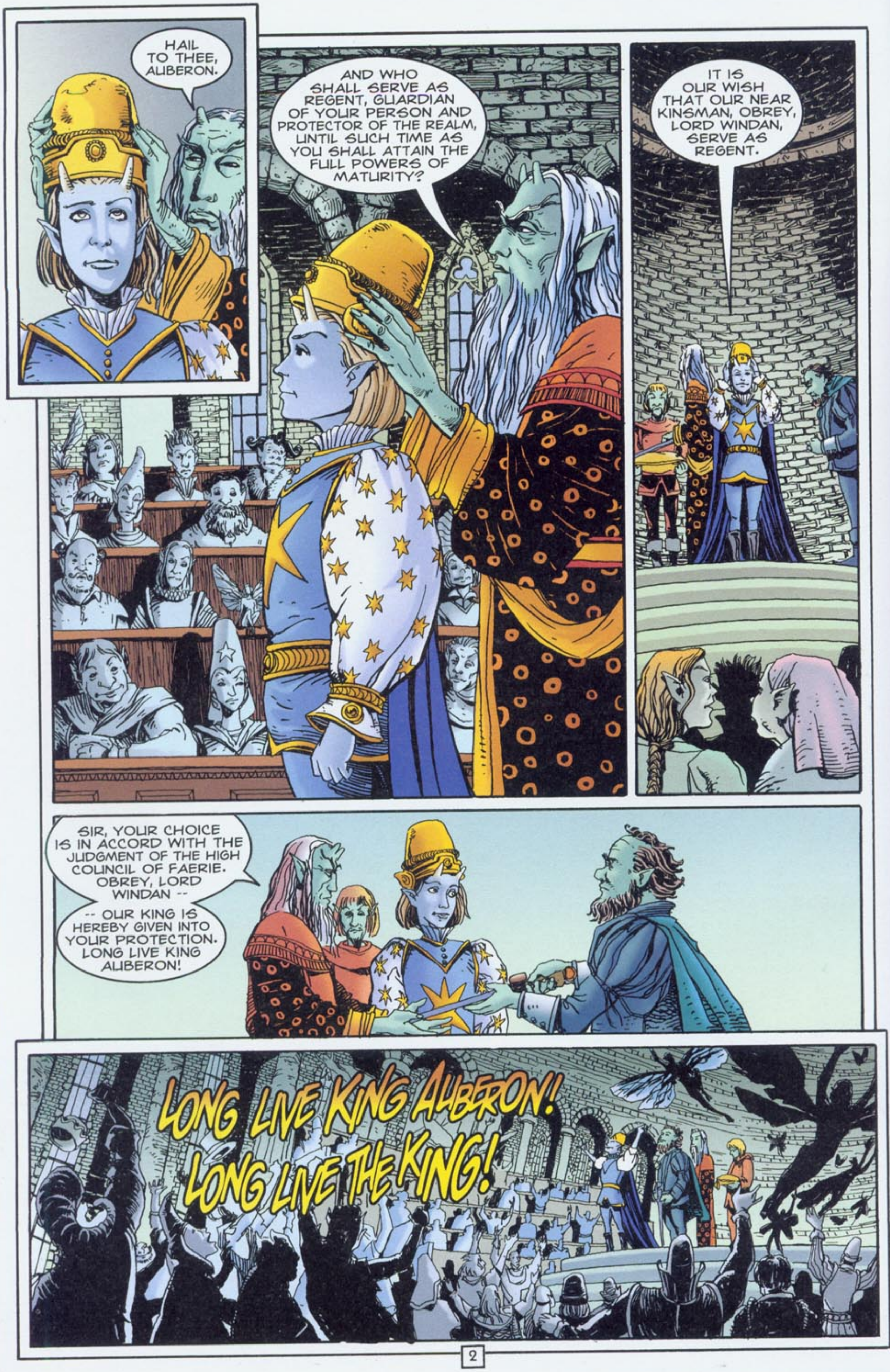
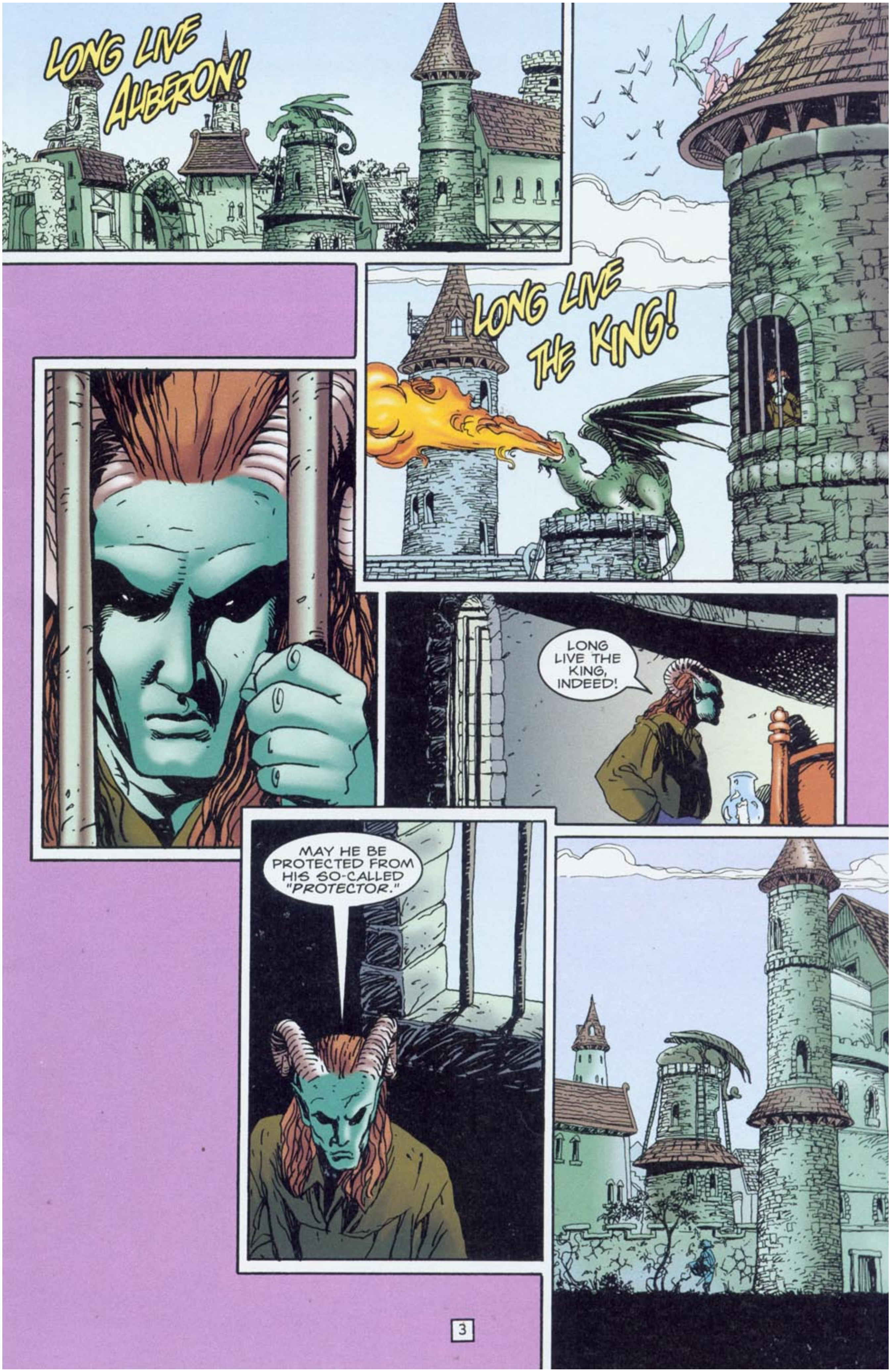
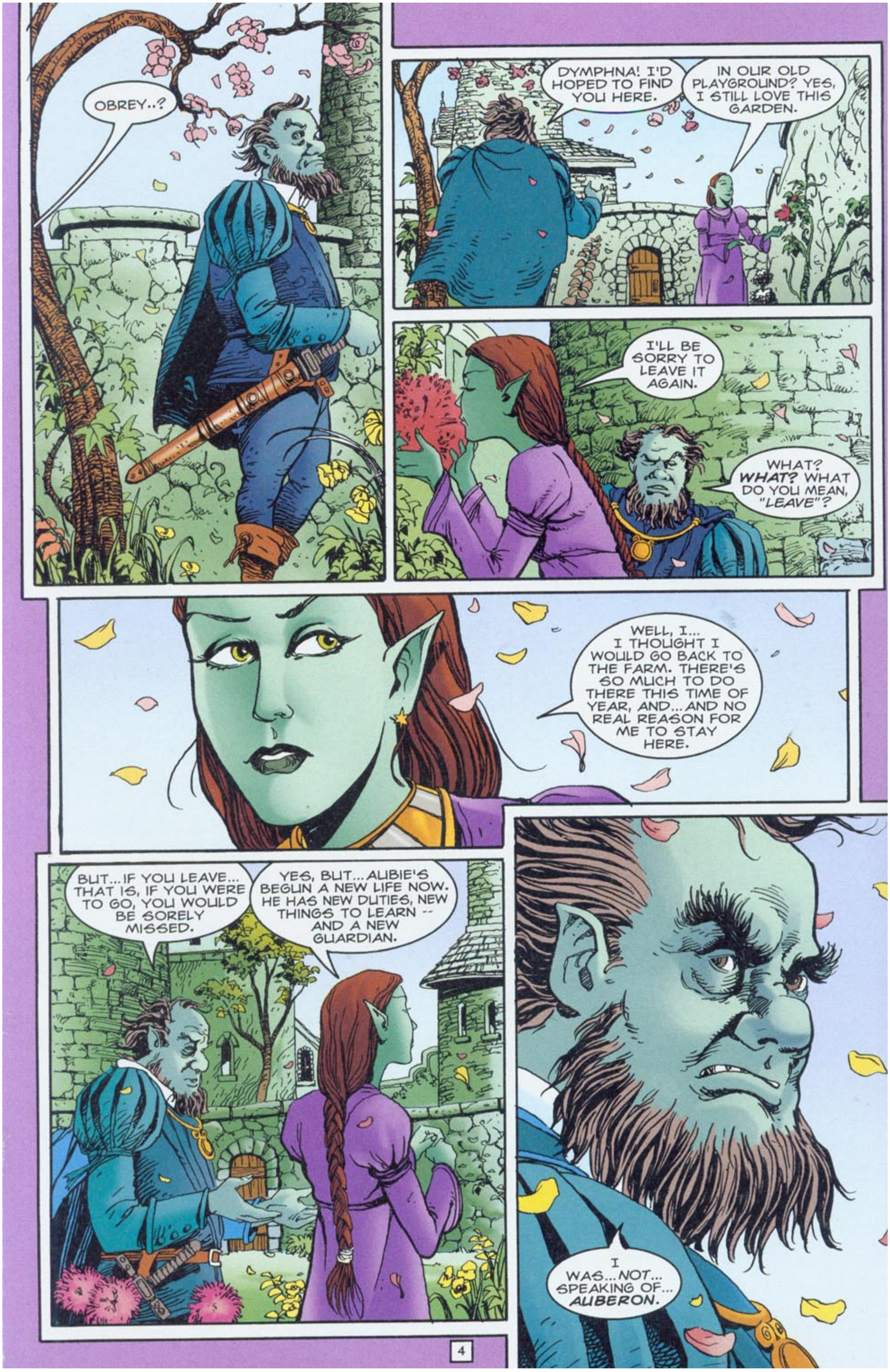
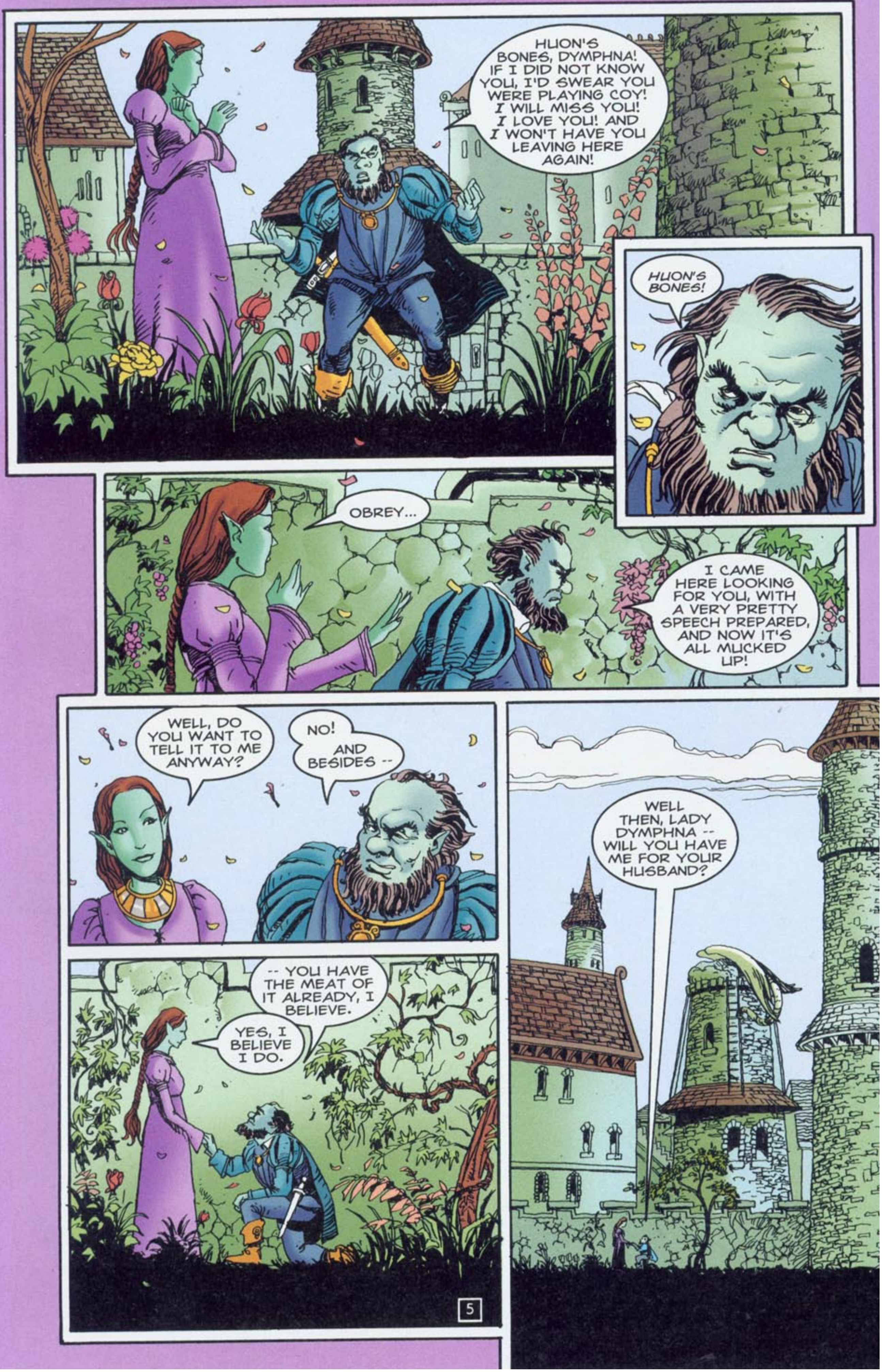
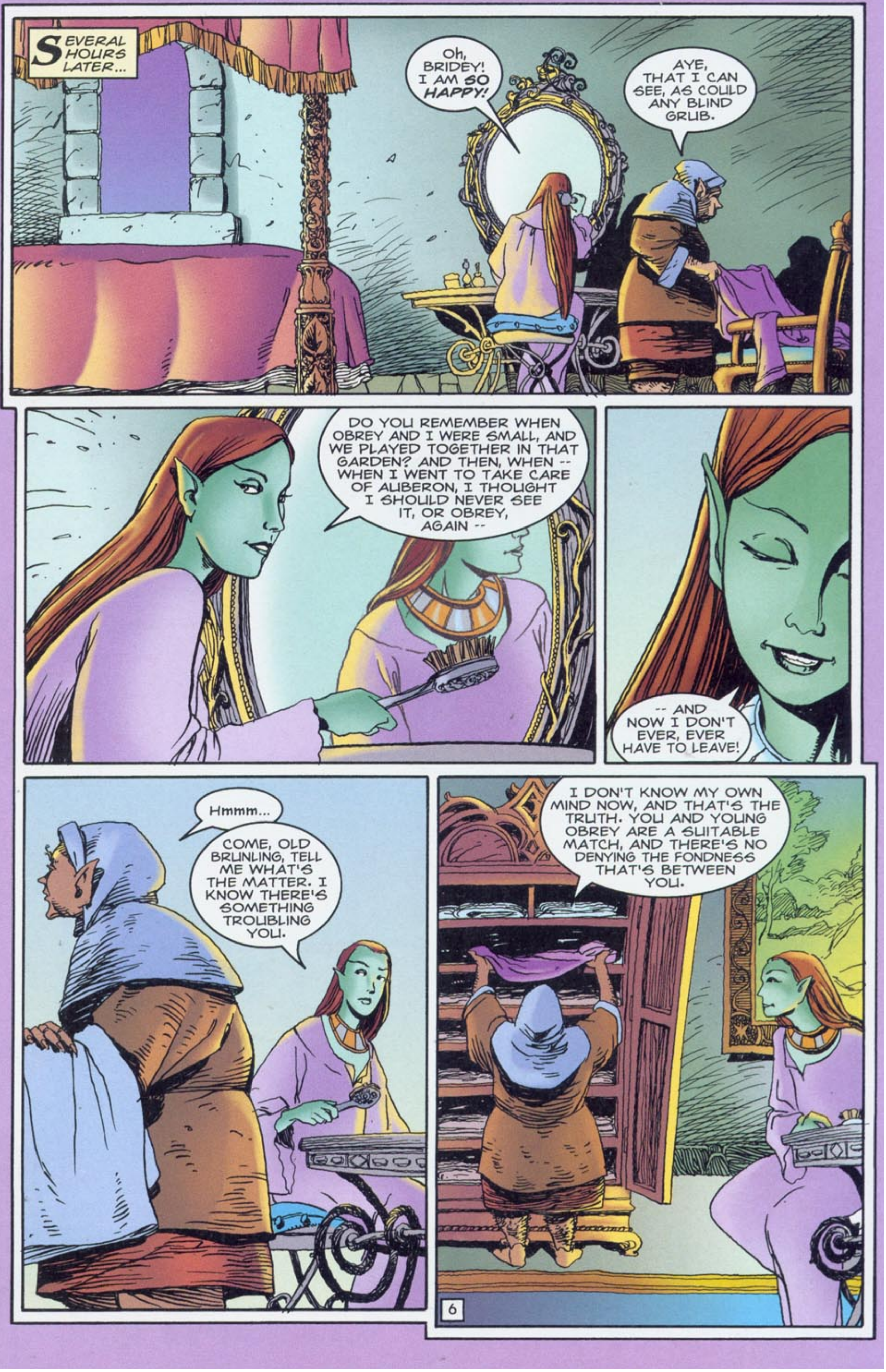
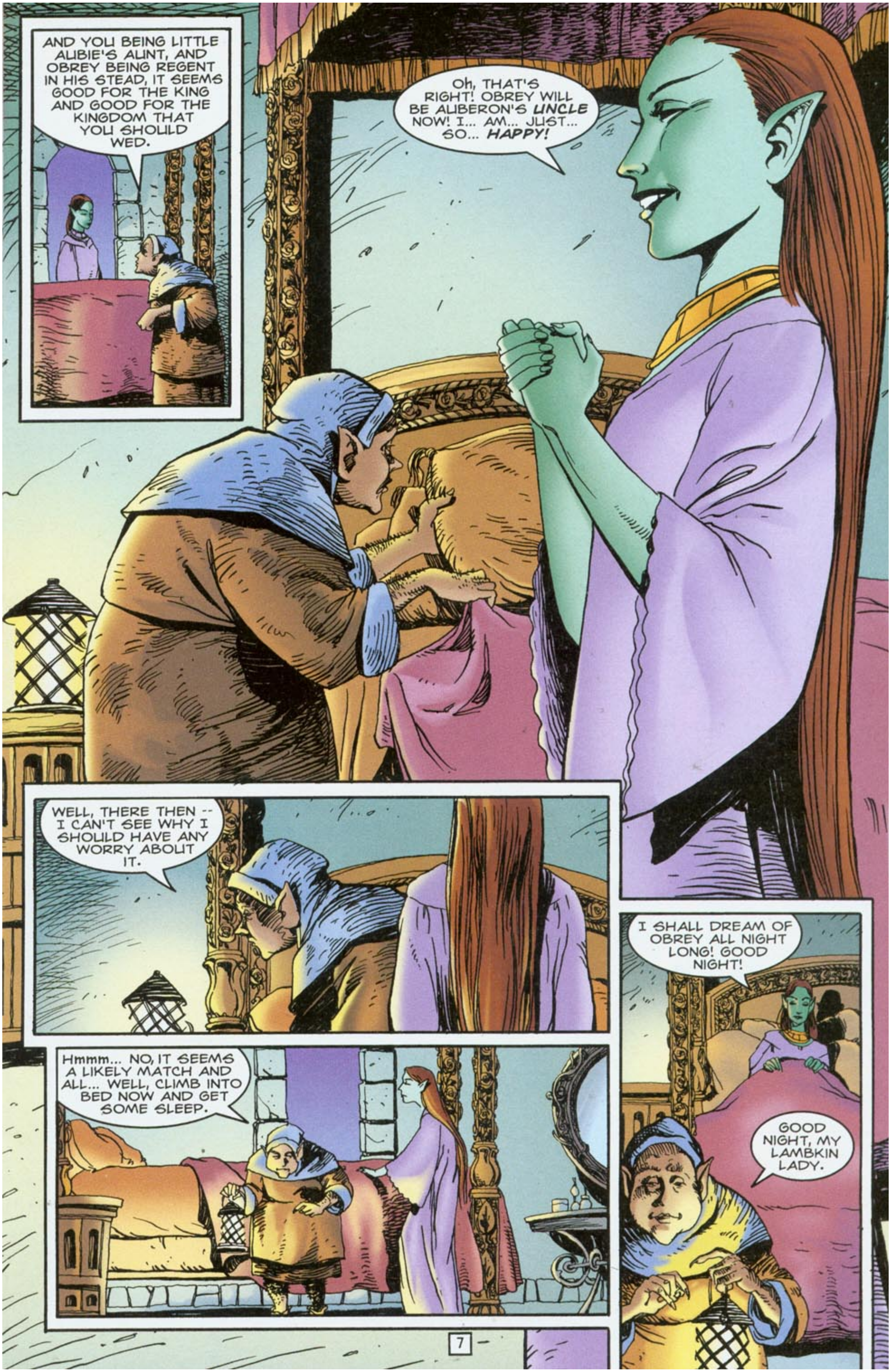

HAIL TO THEE, AUBERON.
AND WHO SHALL SERVE AS REGENT, GUARDIAN OF YOUR PERSON AND PROTECTOR OF THE REALM, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS YOU SHALL ATTAIN THE FULL POWERS OF MATURITY?
IT IS OUR WISH THAT OUR NEAR KINSMAN, OBREY, LORD WINDAN, SERVE AS REGENT.
SIR, YOUR CHOICE IS IN ACCORD WITH THE JUDGMENT OF THE HIGH COUNCIL OF FAERIE. OBREY, LORD WINDAN --
-- OUR KING IS HEREBY GIVEN INTO YOUR PROTECTION. LONG LIVE KING AUBERON!
LONG LIVE KING AUBERON!
LONG LIVE THE KING!

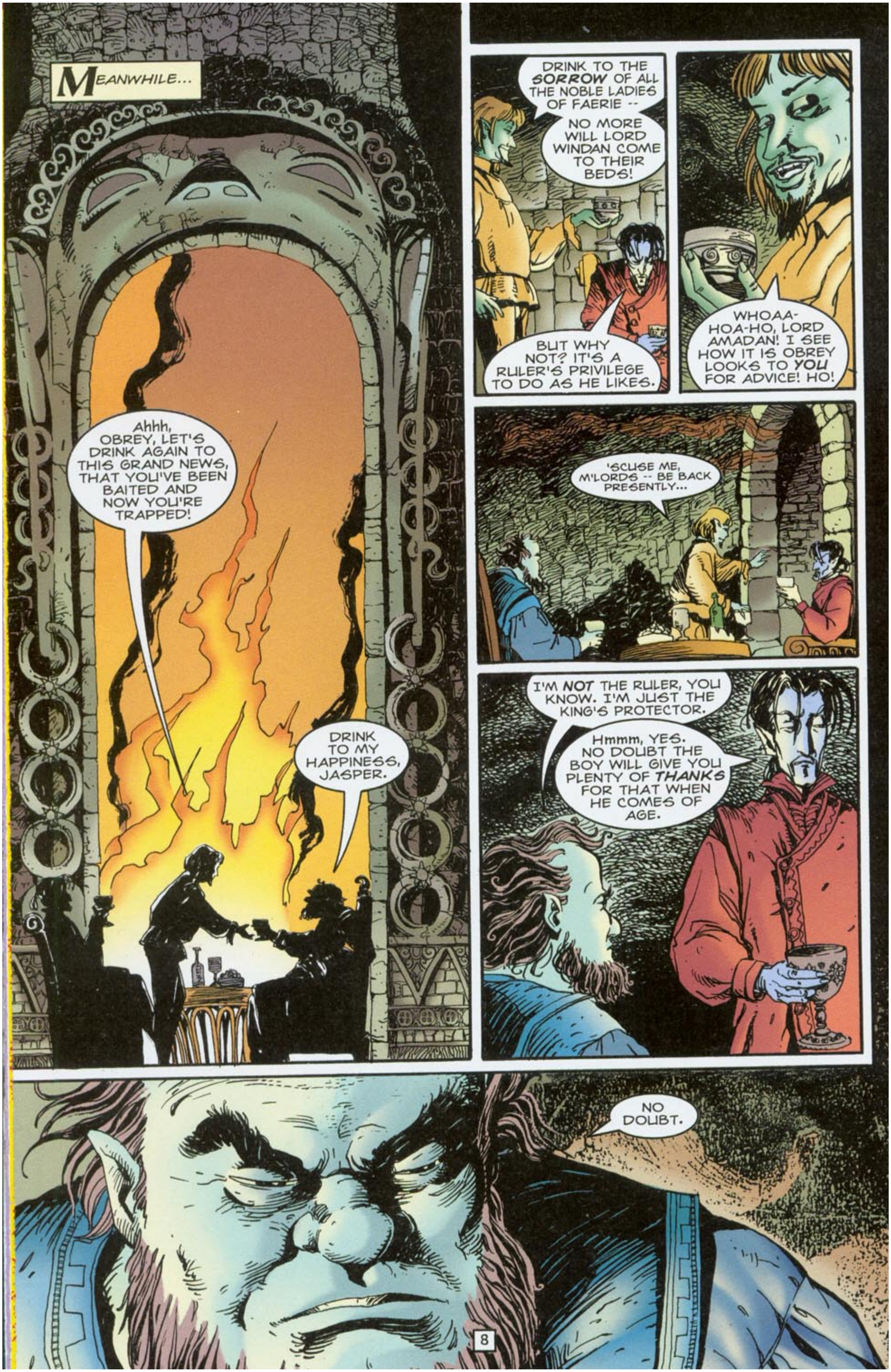

LONG LIVE AUBERON!
LONG LIVE THE KING!
LONG LIVE THE KING, INDEED!
MAY HE BE PROTECTED FROM HIS SO-CALLED *"PROTECTOR."*

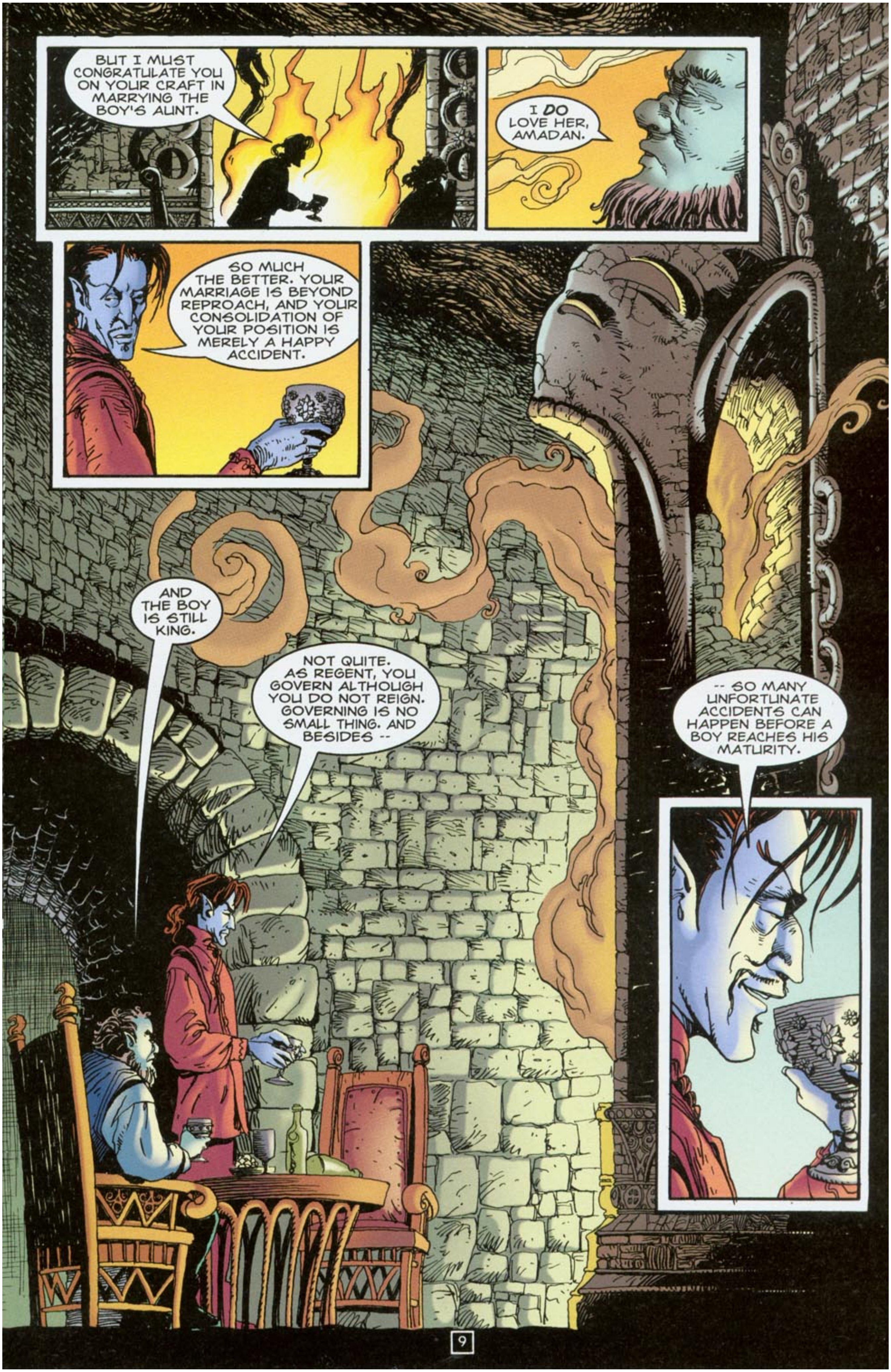

OBREY..?
DYMPHNA! I'D HOPED TO FIND YOU HERE.
IN OUR OLD PLAYGROUND? YES, I STILL LOVE THIS GARDEN.
I'LL BE SORRY TO LEAVE IT AGAIN.
WHAT? **WHAT?** WHAT DO YOU MEAN, *"LEAVE"*?
WELL, I... I THOUGHT I WOULD GO BACK TO THE FARM. THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO THERE THIS TIME OF YEAR, AND... AND NO REAL REASON FOR ME TO STAY HERE.
BUT... IF YOU LEAVE... THAT IS, IF YOU WERE TO GO, YOU WOULD BE SORELY MISSED.
YES, BUT... AUBIE'S BEGUN A NEW LIFE NOW. HE HAS NEW DUTIES, NEW THINGS TO LEARN -- AND A NEW GUARDIAN.
I WAS... NOT... SPEAKING OF... ***AUBERON.***

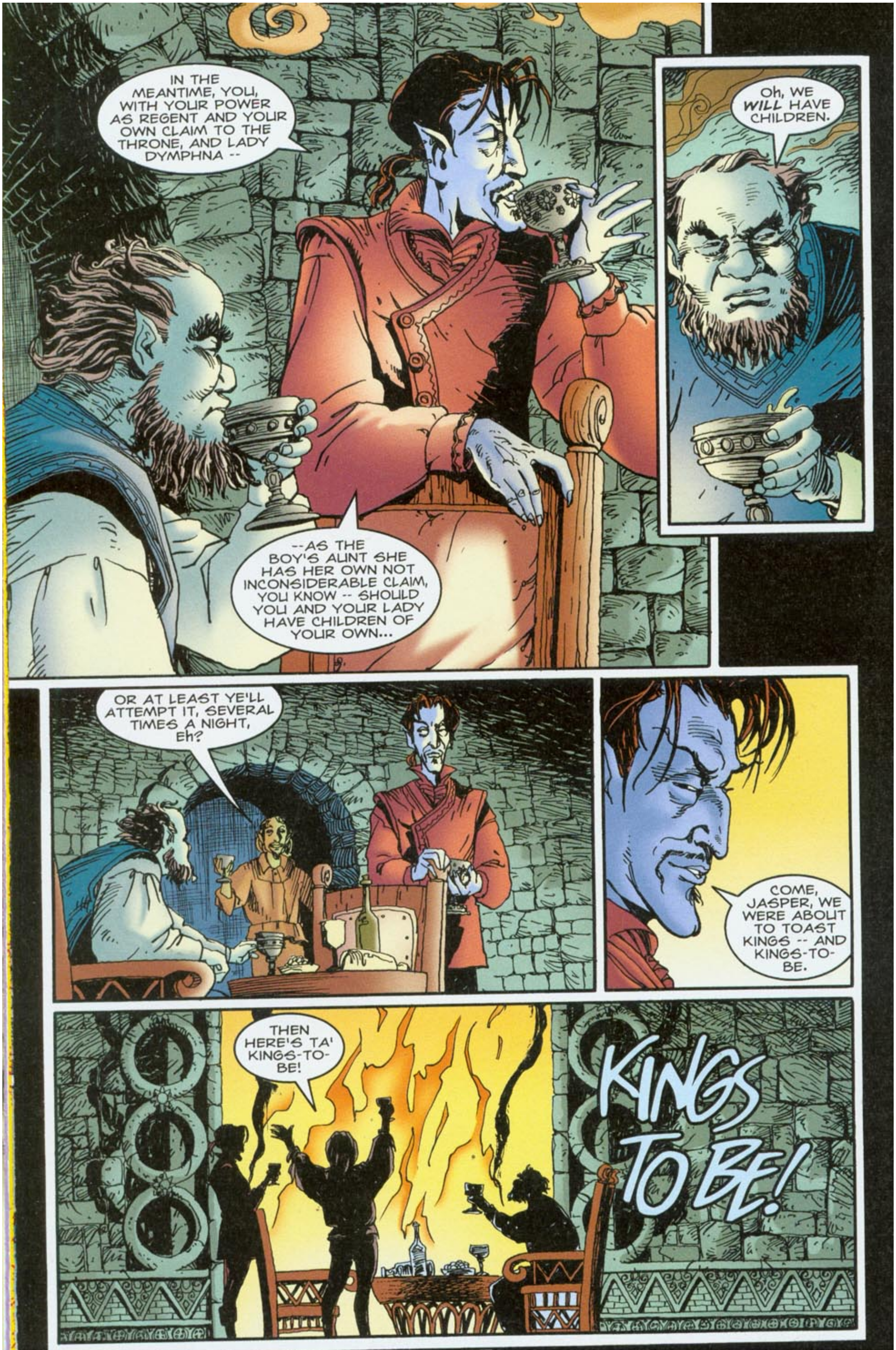

HUON'S BONES, DYMPHNA! IF I DID NOT KNOW YOU, I'D SWEAR YOU WERE PLAYING COY! *I* WILL MISS YOU! *I* LOVE YOU! AND *I* WON'T HAVE YOU LEAVING HERE AGAIN!
HUON'S BONES!
OBREY...
I CAME HERE LOOKING FOR YOU, WITH A VERY PRETTY SPEECH PREPARED, AND NOW IT'S ALL MUCKED UP!
WELL, DO YOU WANT TO TELL IT TO ME ANYWAY?
NO!
AND BESIDES --
-- YOU HAVE THE MEAT OF IT ALREADY, I BELIEVE.
YES, I BELIEVE I DO.
WELL THEN, LADY DYMPHNA -- WILL YOU HAVE ME FOR YOUR HUSBAND?

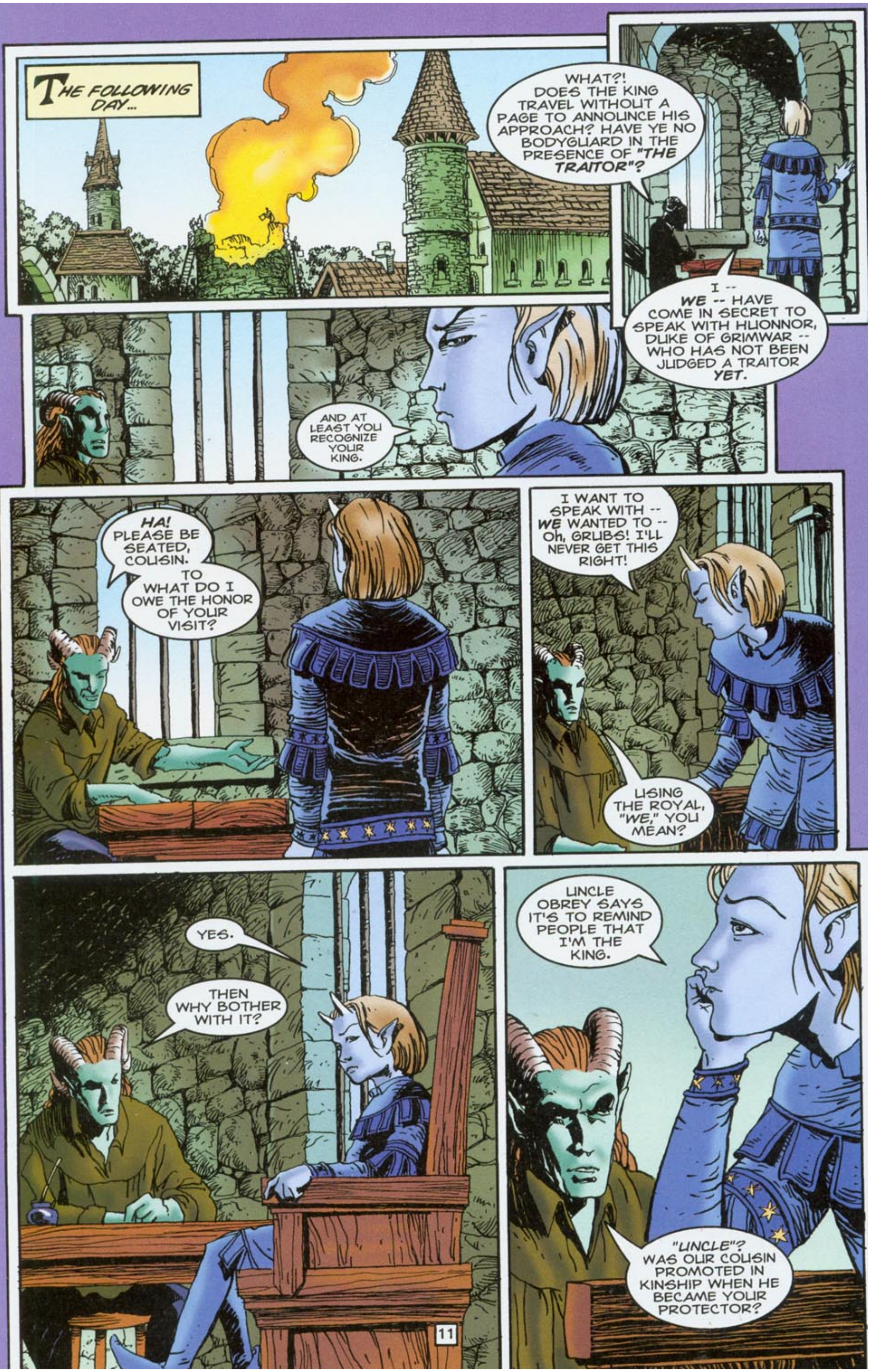

SEVERAL HOURS LATER...
Oh, BRIDEY! I AM SO HAPPY!
AYE, THAT I CAN SEE, AS COULD ANY BLIND GRUB.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN OBREY AND I WERE SMALL, AND WE PLAYED TOGETHER IN THAT GARDEN? AND THEN, WHEN -- WHEN I WENT TO TAKE CARE OF AUBERON, I THOUGHT I SHOULD NEVER SEE IT, OR OBREY, AGAIN --
-- AND NOW I DON'T EVER, EVER HAVE TO LEAVE!
Hmmm...
COME, OLD BRUNLING, TELL ME WHAT'S THE MATTER. I KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING TROUBLING YOU.
I DON'T KNOW MY OWN MIND NOW, AND THAT'S THE TRUTH. YOU AND YOUNG OBREY ARE A SUITABLE MATCH, AND THERE'S NO DENYING THE FONDNESS THAT'S BETWEEN YOU.

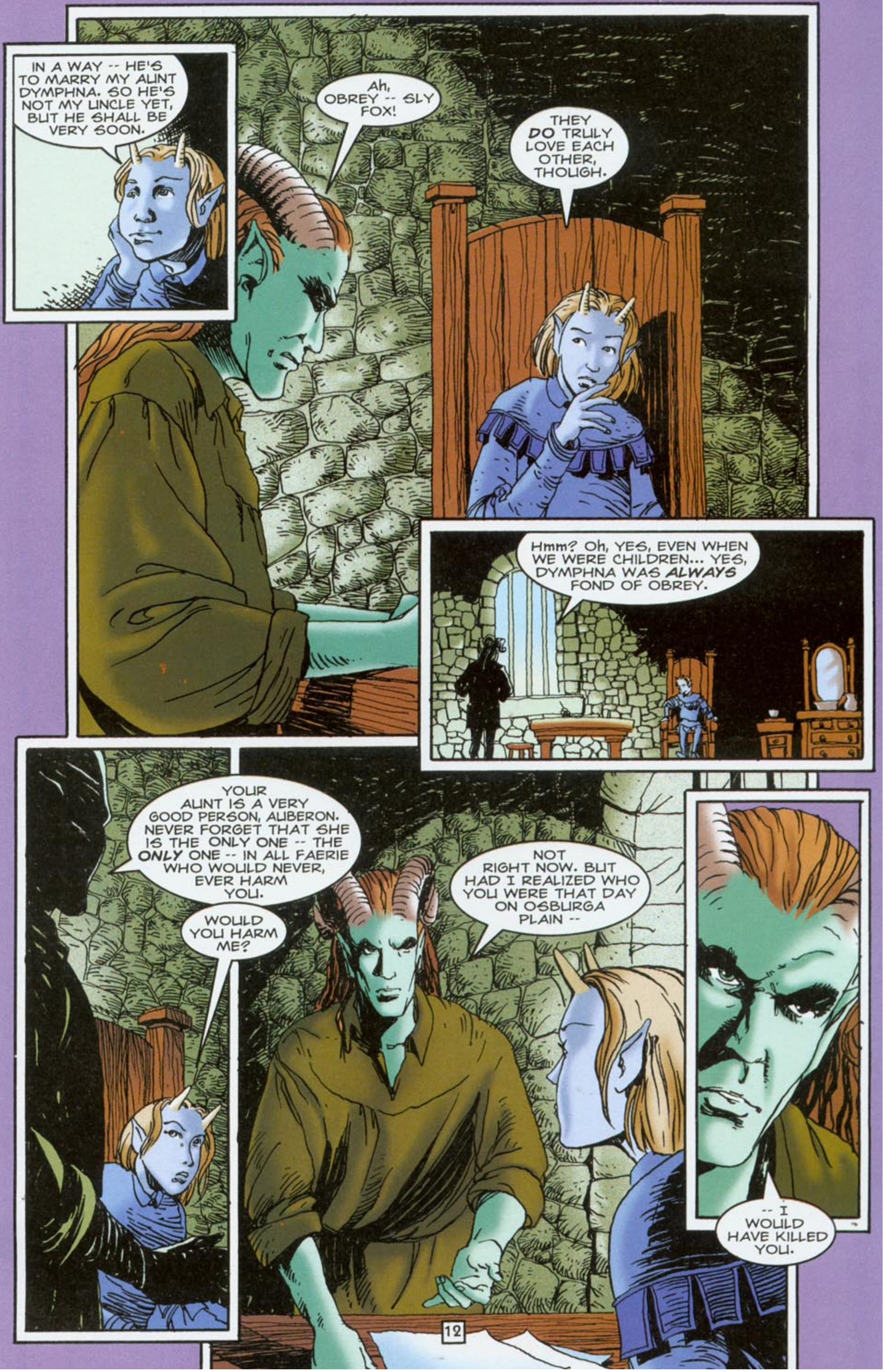

AND YOU BEING LITTLE AUBIE'S AUNT, AND OBREY BEING REGENT IN HIS STEAD, IT SEEMS GOOD FOR THE KING AND GOOD FOR THE KINGDOM THAT YOU SHOULD WED.
Oh, THAT'S RIGHT! OBREY WILL BE AUBERON'S *UNCLE* NOW! I... AM... JUST... SO... *HAPPY!*
WELL, THERE THEN -- I CAN'T SEE WHY I SHOULD HAVE ANY WORRY ABOUT IT.
Hmmm... NO, IT SEEMS A LIKELY MATCH AND ALL... WELL, CLIMB INTO BED NOW AND GET SOME SLEEP.
I SHALL DREAM OF OBREY ALL NIGHT LONG! GOOD NIGHT!
GOOD NIGHT, MY LAMBKIN LADY.

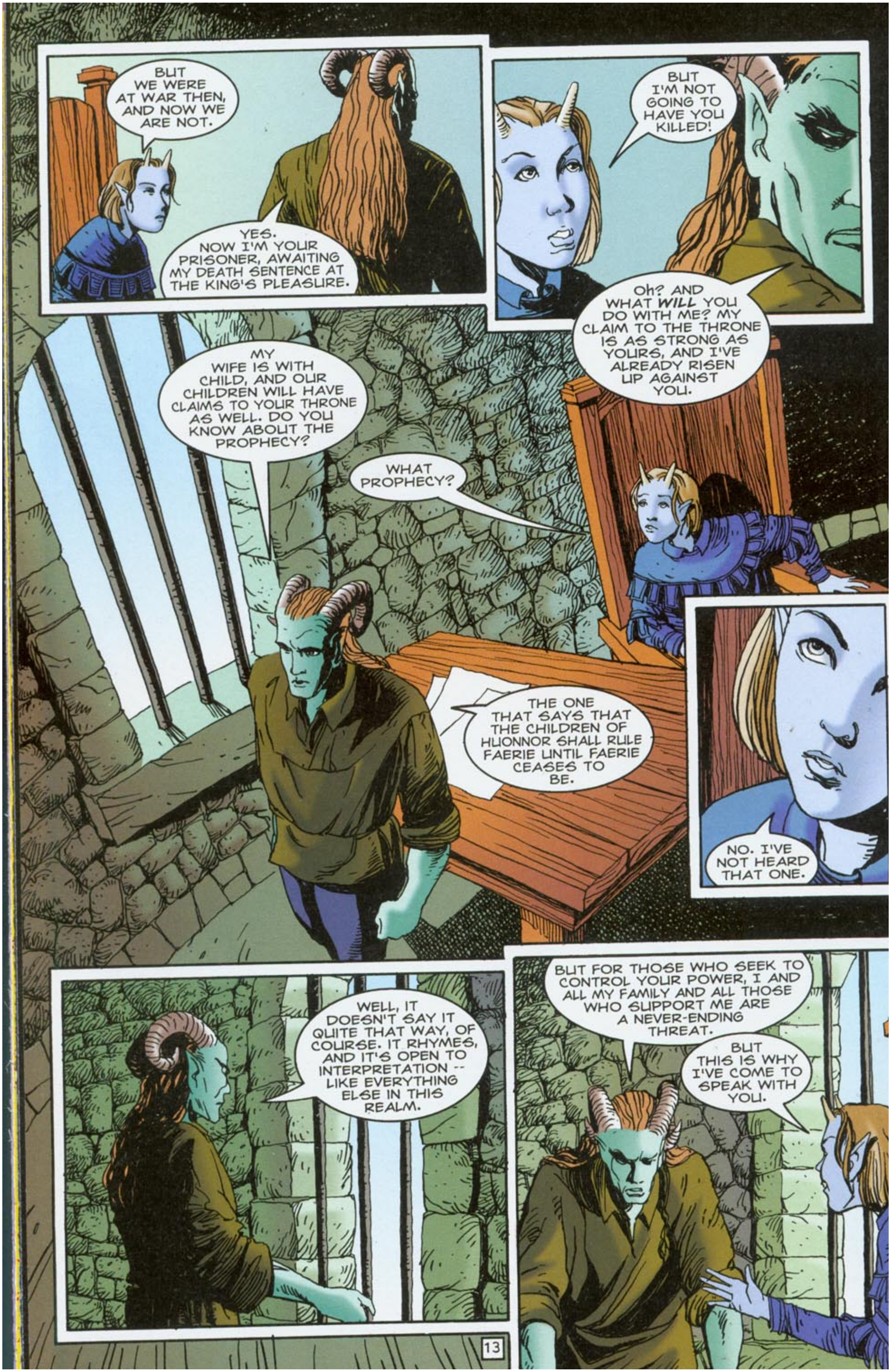

MEANWHILE...
Ahhh, OBREY, LET'S DRINK AGAIN TO THIS GRAND NEWS, THAT YOU'VE BEEN BAITED AND NOW YOU'RE TRAPPED!
DRINK TO MY HAPPINESS, JASPER.
DRINK TO THE SORROW OF ALL THE NOBLE LADIES OF FAERIE --
NO MORE WILL LORD WINDAN COME TO THEIR BEDS!
BUT WHY NOT? IT'S A RULER'S PRIVILEGE TO DO AS HE LIKES.
WHOAA-HOA-HO, LORD AMADAN! I SEE HOW IT IS OBREY LOOKS TO YOU FOR ADVICE! HO!
'SCUSE ME, M'LORDS -- BE BACK PRESENTLY...
I'M NOT THE RULER, YOU KNOW. I'M JUST THE KING'S PROTECTOR.
Hmmm, YES. NO DOUBT THE BOY WILL GIVE YOU PLENTY OF THANKS FOR THAT WHEN HE COMES OF AGE.
NO DOUBT.

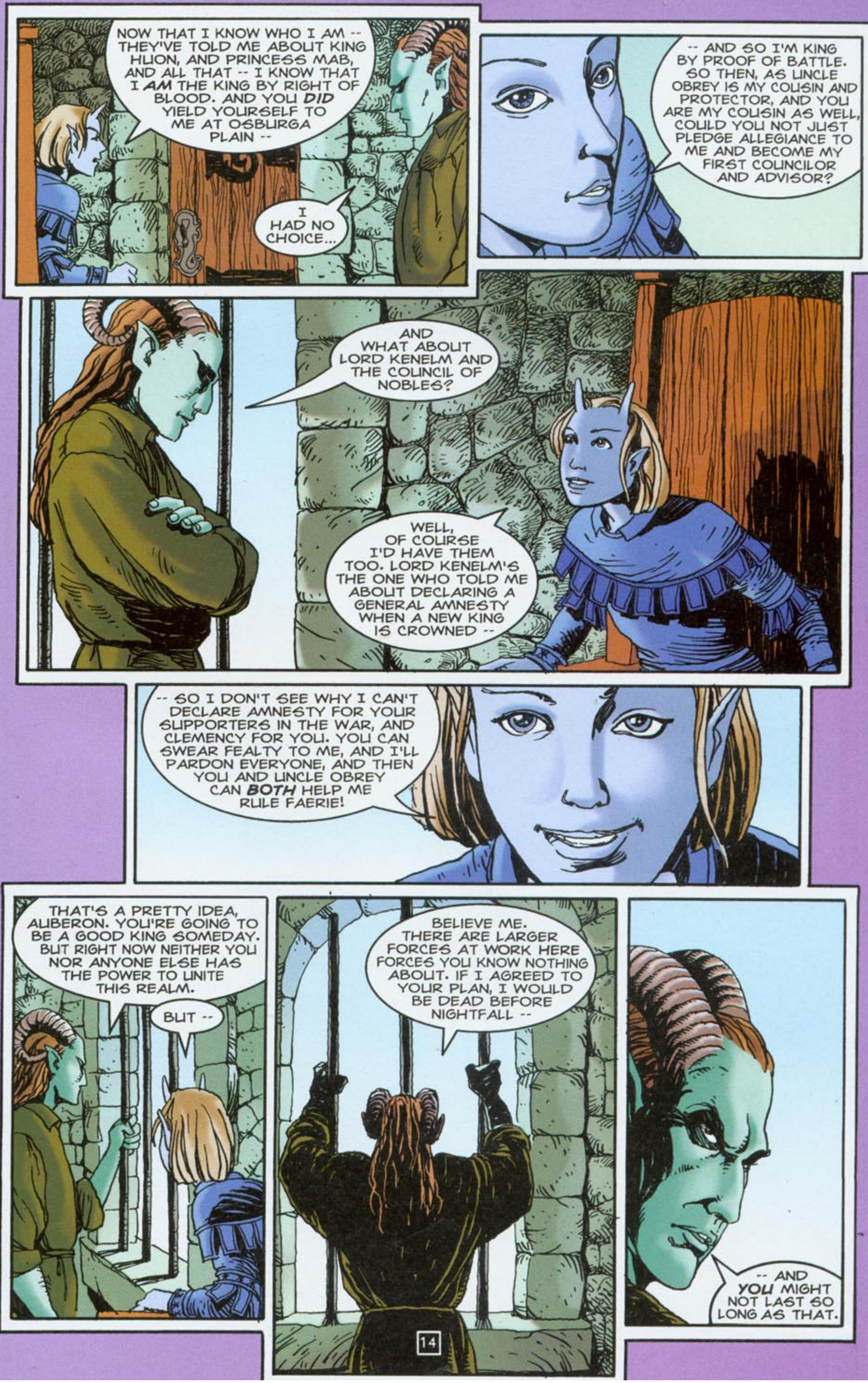

BUT I MUST CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR CRAFT IN MARRYING THE BOY'S AUNT.
I *DO* LOVE HER, AMADAN.
SO MUCH THE BETTER. YOUR MARRIAGE IS BEYOND REPROACH, AND YOUR CONSOLIDATION OF YOUR POSITION IS MERELY A HAPPY ACCIDENT.
AND THE BOY IS STILL KING.
NOT QUITE. AS REGENT, YOU GOVERN ALTHOUGH YOU DO NOT REIGN. GOVERNING IS NO SMALL THING. AND BESIDES --
-- SO MANY UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENTS CAN HAPPEN BEFORE A BOY REACHES HIS MATURITY.

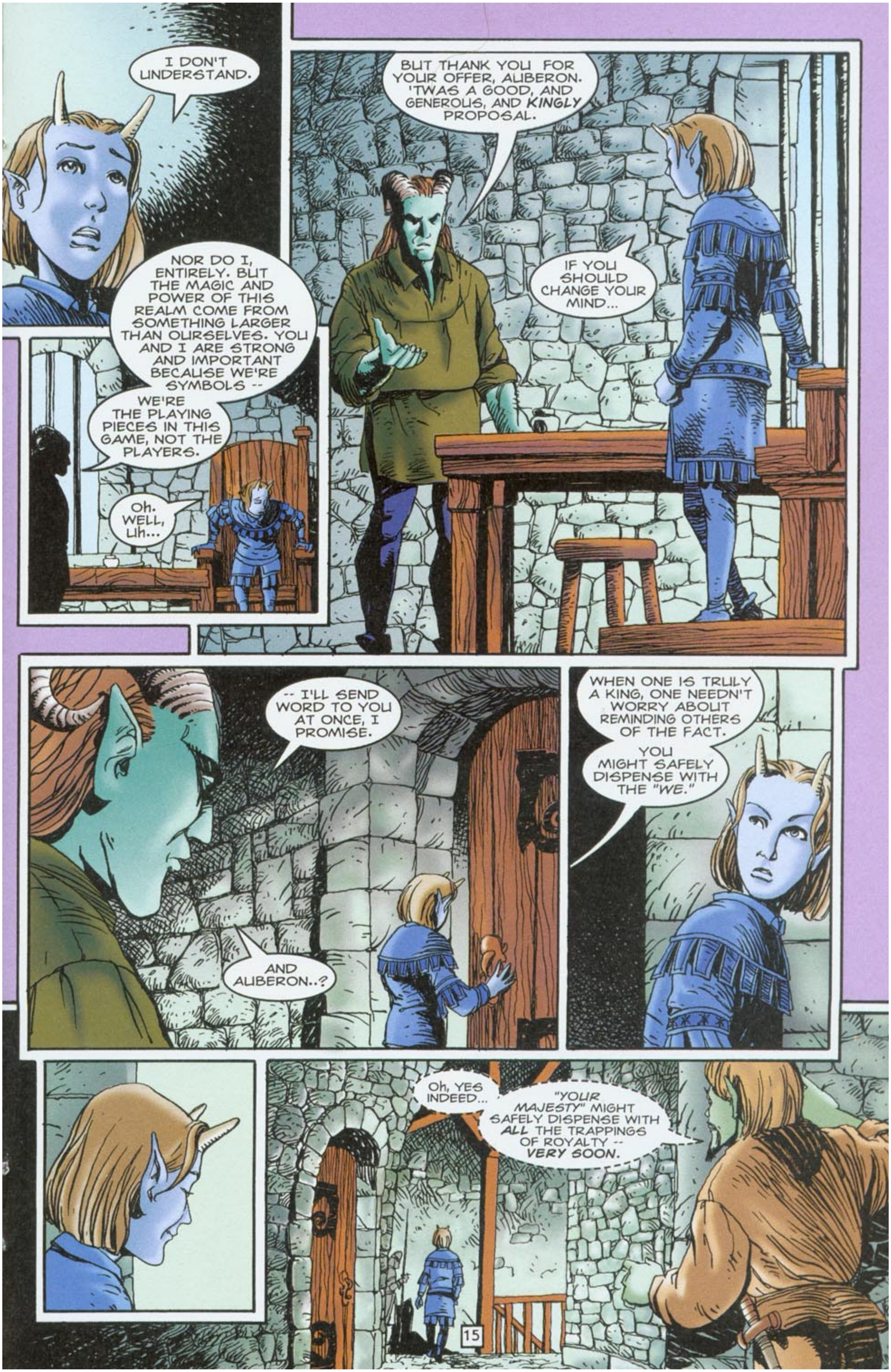

IN THE MEANTIME, YOU, WITH YOUR POWER AS REGENT AND YOUR OWN CLAIM TO THE THRONE, AND LADY DYMPHNA --
--AS THE BOY'S AUNT SHE HAS HER OWN NOT INCONSIDERABLE CLAIM, YOU KNOW -- SHOULD YOU AND YOUR LADY HAVE CHILDREN OF YOUR OWN...
Oh, WE *WILL* HAVE CHILDREN.
OR AT LEAST YE'LL ATTEMPT IT, SEVERAL TIMES A NIGHT, Eh?
COME, JASPER, WE WERE ABOUT TO TOAST KINGS -- AND KINGS-TO-BE.
THEN HERE'S TA' KINGS-TO-BE!
KINGS TO BE!

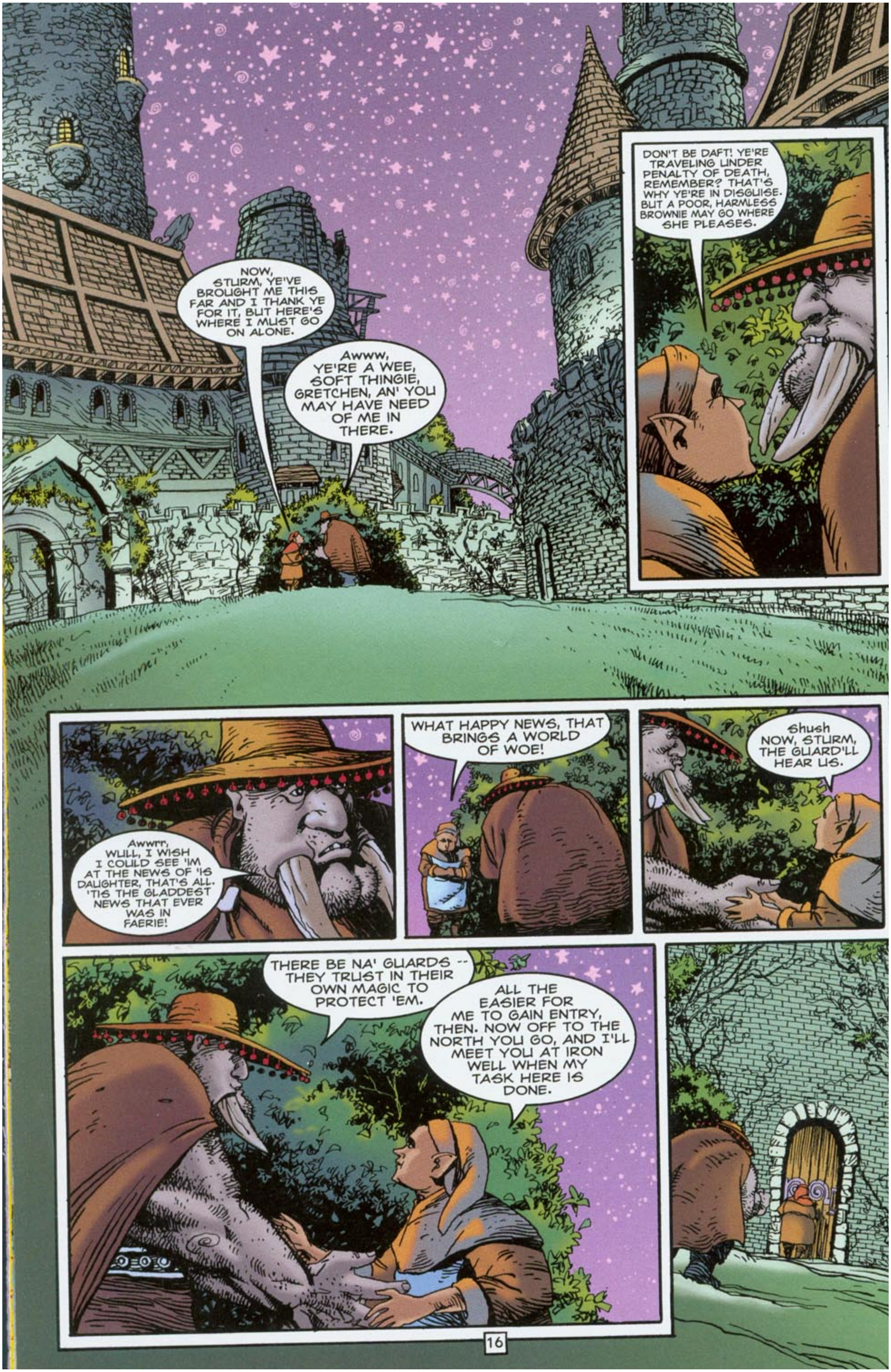

THE FOLLOWING DAY...
WHAT?! DOES THE KING TRAVEL WITHOUT A PAGE TO ANNOUNCE HIS APPROACH? HAVE YE NO BODYGUARD IN THE PRESENCE OF "THE TRAITOR"?
I -- WE -- HAVE COME IN SECRET TO SPEAK WITH HUONNOR, DUKE OF GRIMWAR -- WHO HAS NOT BEEN JUDGED A TRAITOR YET.
AND AT LEAST YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR KING.
HA! PLEASE BE SEATED, COUSIN.
TO WHAT DO I OWE THE HONOR OF YOUR VISIT?
I WANT TO SPEAK WITH -- WE WANTED TO -- Oh, GRUBS! I'LL NEVER GET THIS RIGHT!
USING THE ROYAL, "WE," YOU MEAN?
YES.
THEN WHY BOTHER WITH IT?
UNCLE OBREY SAYS IT'S TO REMIND PEOPLE THAT I'M THE KING.
"UNCLE"? WAS OUR COUSIN PROMOTED IN KINSHIP WHEN HE BECAME YOUR PROTECTOR?

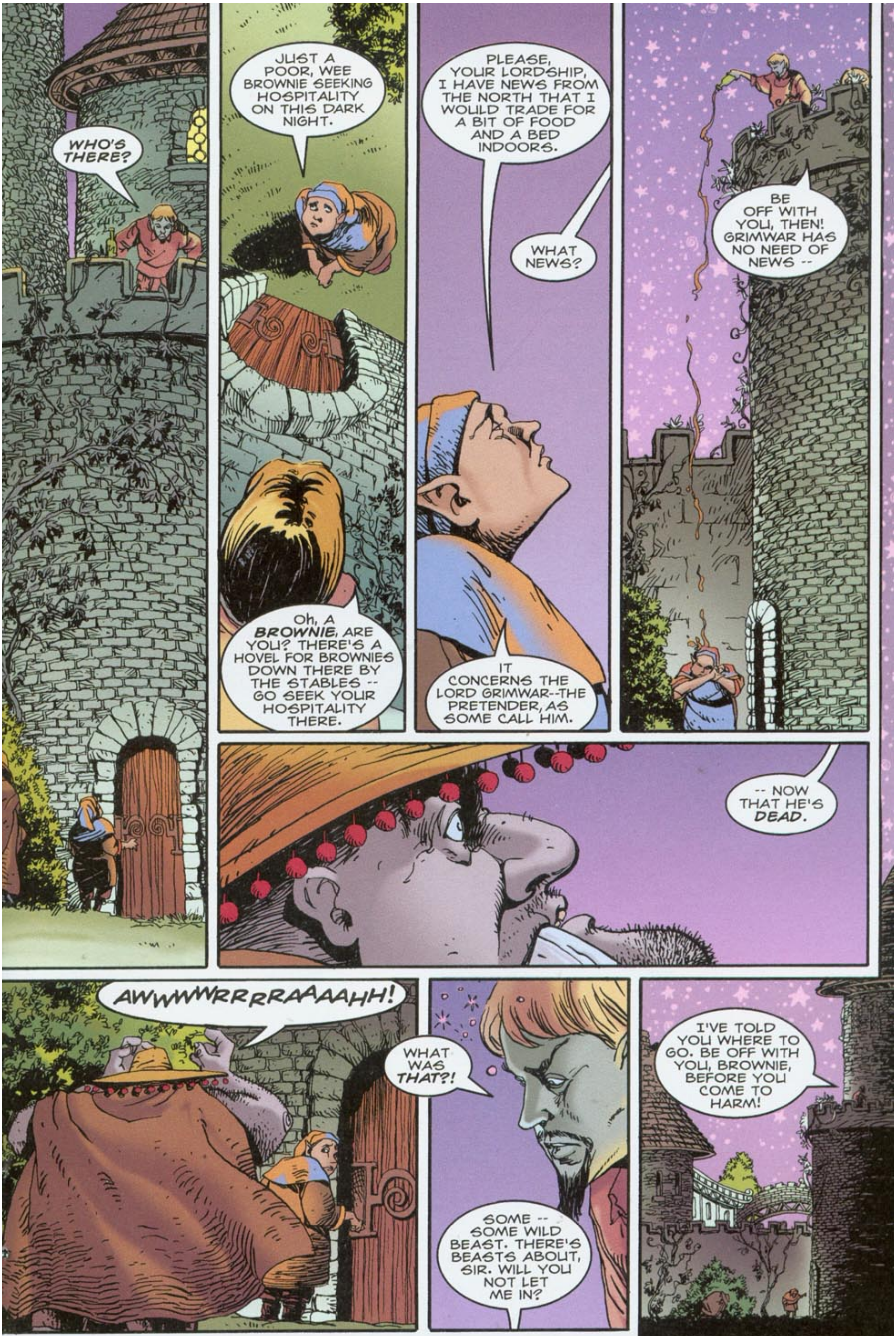

IN A WAY -- HE'S TO MARRY MY AUNT DYMPHNA. SO HE'S NOT MY UNCLE YET, BUT HE SHALL BE VERY SOON.
Ah, OBREY -- SLY FOX!
THEY DO TRULY LOVE EACH OTHER, THOUGH.
Hmm? Oh, YES, EVEN WHEN WE WERE CHILDREN... YES, DYMPHNA WAS ALWAYS FOND OF OBREY.
YOUR AUNT IS A VERY GOOD PERSON, AUBERON. NEVER FORGET THAT SHE IS THE ONLY ONE -- THE ONLY ONE -- IN ALL FAERIE WHO WOULD NEVER, EVER HARM YOU.
WOULD YOU HARM ME?
NOT RIGHT NOW. BUT HAD I REALIZED WHO YOU WERE THAT DAY ON OSBURGA PLAIN --
-- I WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU.

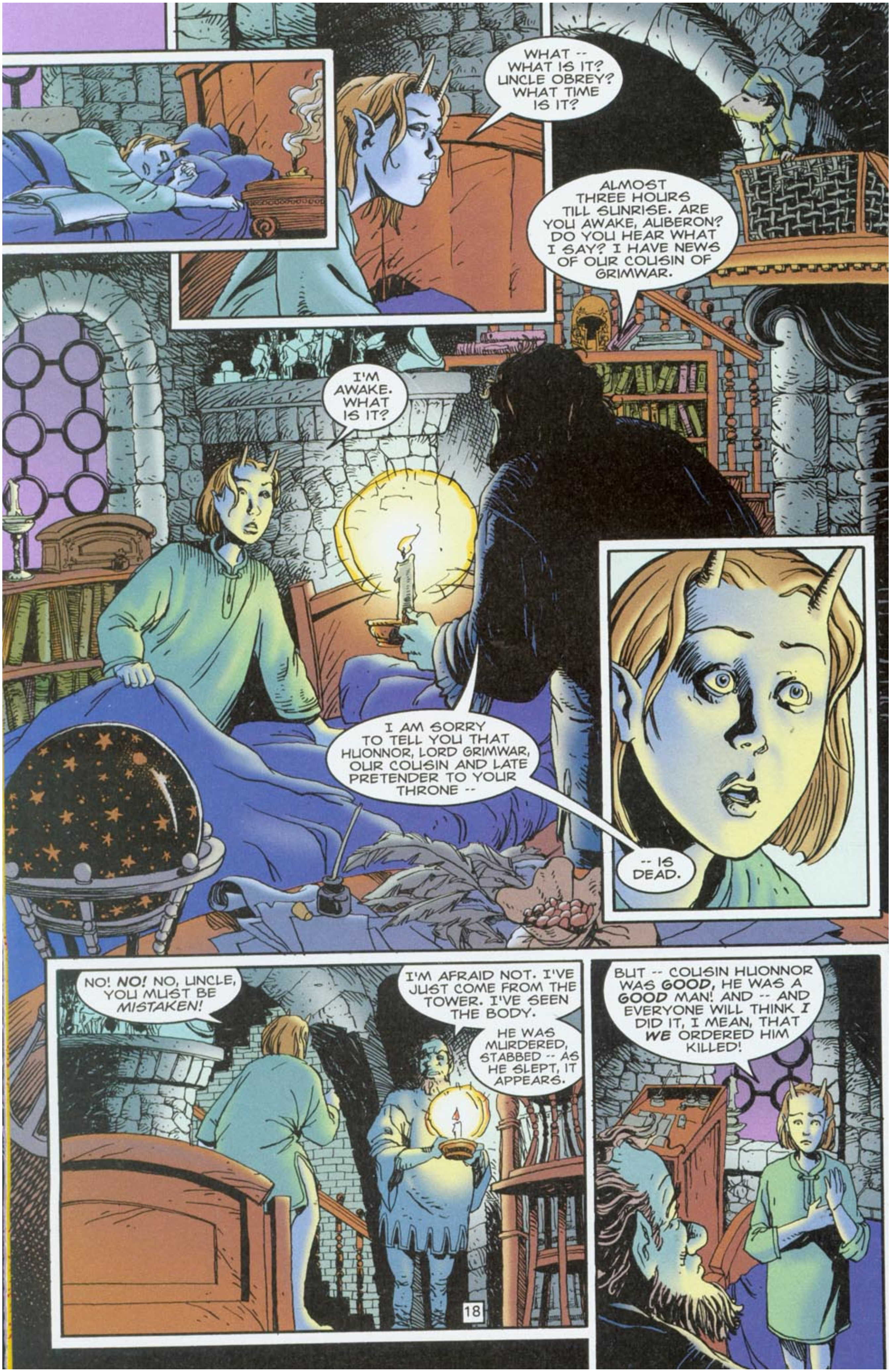

BUT WE WERE AT WAR THEN, AND NOW WE ARE NOT.
YES. NOW I'M YOUR PRISONER, AWAITING MY DEATH SENTENCE AT THE KING'S PLEASURE.
BUT I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE YOU KILLED!
Oh? AND WHAT *WILL* YOU DO WITH ME? MY CLAIM TO THE THRONE IS AS STRONG AS YOURS, AND I'VE ALREADY RISEN UP AGAINST YOU.
MY WIFE IS WITH CHILD, AND OUR CHILDREN WILL HAVE CLAIMS TO YOUR THRONE AS WELL. DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PROPHECY?
WHAT PROPHECY?
THE ONE THAT SAYS THAT THE CHILDREN OF HUONNOR SHALL RULE FAERIE UNTIL FAERIE CEASES TO BE.
NO. I'VE NOT HEARD THAT ONE.
WELL, IT DOESN'T SAY IT QUITE THAT WAY, OF COURSE. IT RHYMES, AND IT'S OPEN TO INTERPRETATION -- LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS REALM.
BUT FOR THOSE WHO SEEK TO CONTROL YOUR POWER, I AND ALL MY FAMILY AND ALL THOSE WHO SUPPORT ME ARE A NEVER-ENDING THREAT.
BUT THIS IS WHY I'VE COME TO SPEAK WITH YOU.

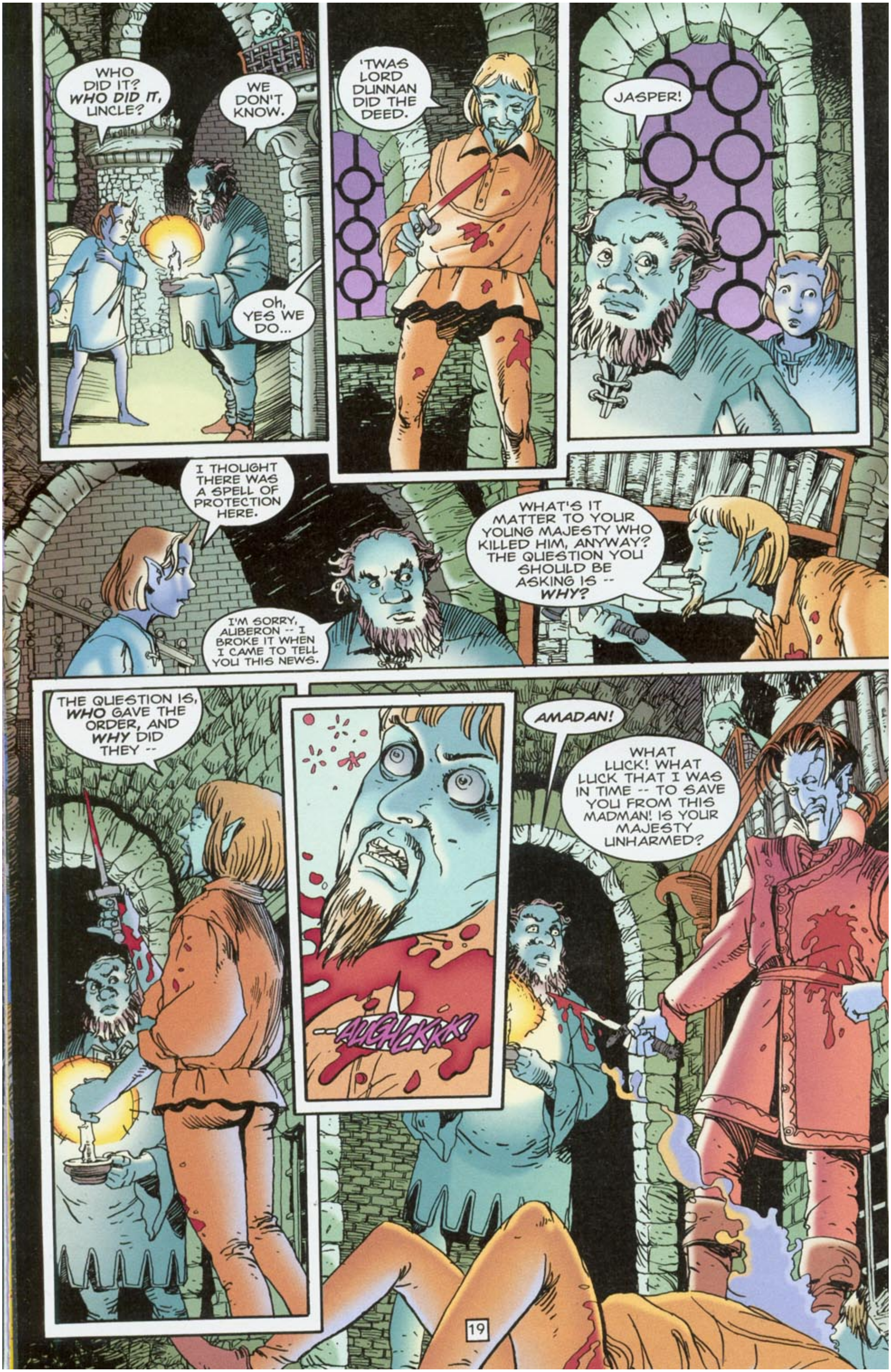

NOW THAT I KNOW WHO I AM -- THEY'VE TOLD ME ABOUT KING HUON, AND PRINCESS MAB, AND ALL THAT -- I KNOW THAT I *AM* THE KING BY RIGHT OF BLOOD. AND YOU *DID* YIELD YOURSELF TO ME AT OSBURGA PLAIN --
I HAD NO CHOICE...
-- AND SO I'M KING BY PROOF OF BATTLE. SO THEN, AS UNCLE OBREY IS MY COUSIN AND PROTECTOR, AND YOU ARE MY COUSIN AS WELL, COULD YOU NOT JUST PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO ME AND BECOME MY FIRST COUNCILOR AND ADVISOR?
AND WHAT ABOUT LORD KENELM AND THE COUNCIL OF NOBLES?
WELL, OF COURSE I'D HAVE THEM TOO. LORD KENELM'S THE ONE WHO TOLD ME ABOUT DECLARING A GENERAL AMNESTY WHEN A NEW KING IS CROWNED --
-- SO I DON'T SEE WHY I CAN'T DECLARE AMNESTY FOR YOUR SUPPORTERS IN THE WAR, AND CLEMENCY FOR YOU. YOU CAN SWEAR FEALTY TO ME, AND I'LL PARDON EVERYONE, AND THEN YOU AND UNCLE OBREY CAN *BOTH* HELP ME RULE FAERIE!
THAT'S A PRETTY IDEA, AUBERON. YOU'RE GOING TO BE A GOOD KING SOMEDAY. BUT RIGHT NOW NEITHER YOU NOR ANYONE ELSE HAS THE POWER TO UNITE THIS REALM.
BUT --
BELIEVE ME. THERE ARE LARGER FORCES AT WORK HERE FORCES YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT. IF I AGREED TO YOUR PLAN, I WOULD BE DEAD BEFORE NIGHTFALL --
-- AND *YOU* MIGHT NOT LAST SO LONG AS THAT.

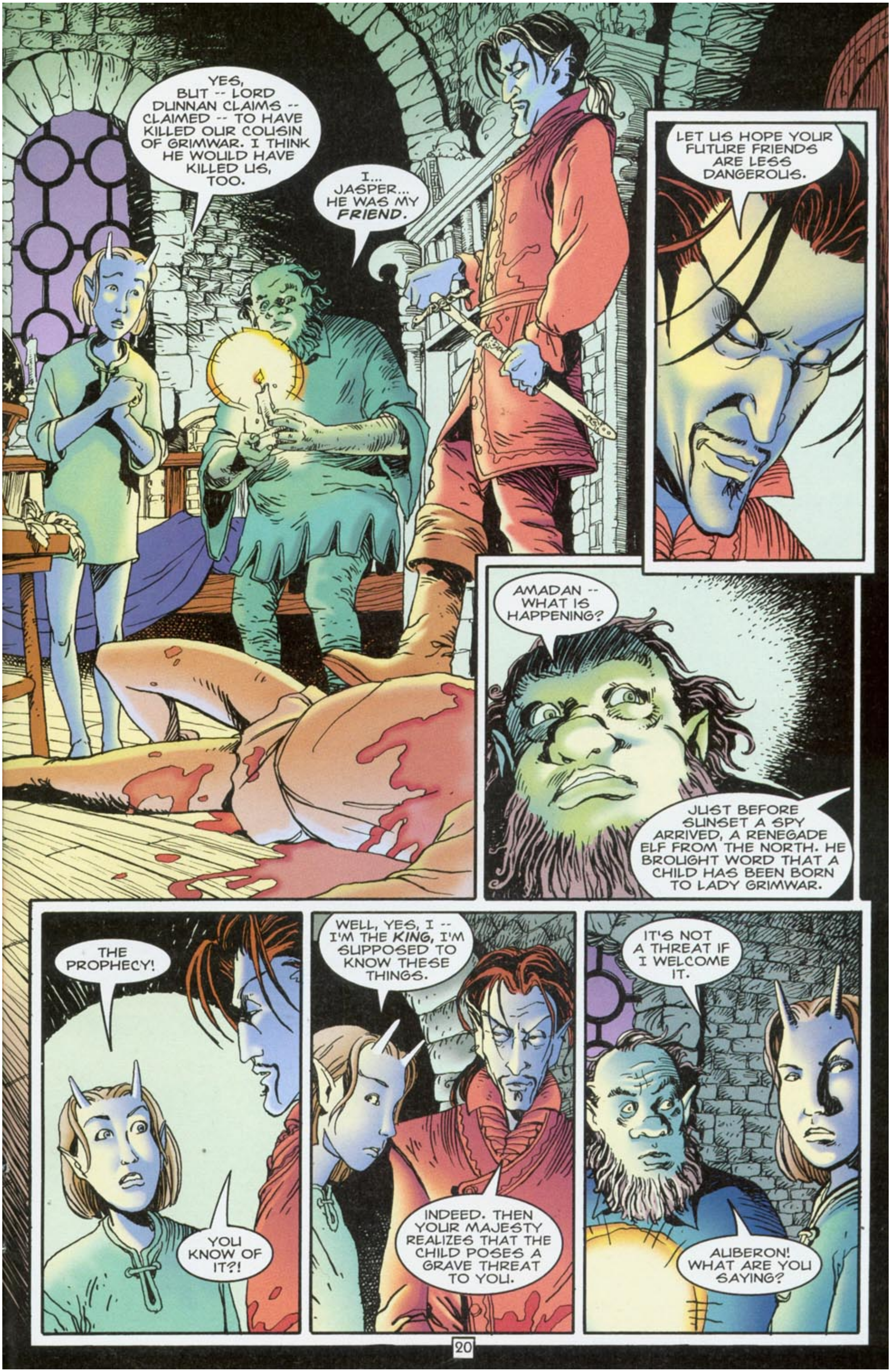

I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
NOR DO I, ENTIRELY. BUT THE MAGIC AND POWER OF THIS REALM COME FROM SOMETHING LARGER THAN OURSELVES. YOU AND I ARE STRONG AND IMPORTANT BECAUSE WE'RE SYMBOLS --
WE'RE THE PLAYING PIECES IN THIS GAME, NOT THE PLAYERS.
Oh. WELL, Uh...
BUT THANK YOU FOR YOUR OFFER, AUBERON. 'TWAS A GOOD, AND GENEROUS, AND *KINGLY* PROPOSAL.
IF YOU SHOULD CHANGE YOUR MIND...
-- I'LL SEND WORD TO YOU AT ONCE, I PROMISE.
AND AUBERON..?
WHEN ONE IS TRULY A KING, ONE NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT REMINDING OTHERS OF THE FACT.
YOU MIGHT SAFELY DISPENSE WITH THE "*WE.*"
Oh, YES INDEED...
"*YOUR MAJESTY*" MIGHT SAFELY DISPENSE WITH ***ALL*** THE TRAPPINGS OF ROYALTY -- ***VERY SOON.***

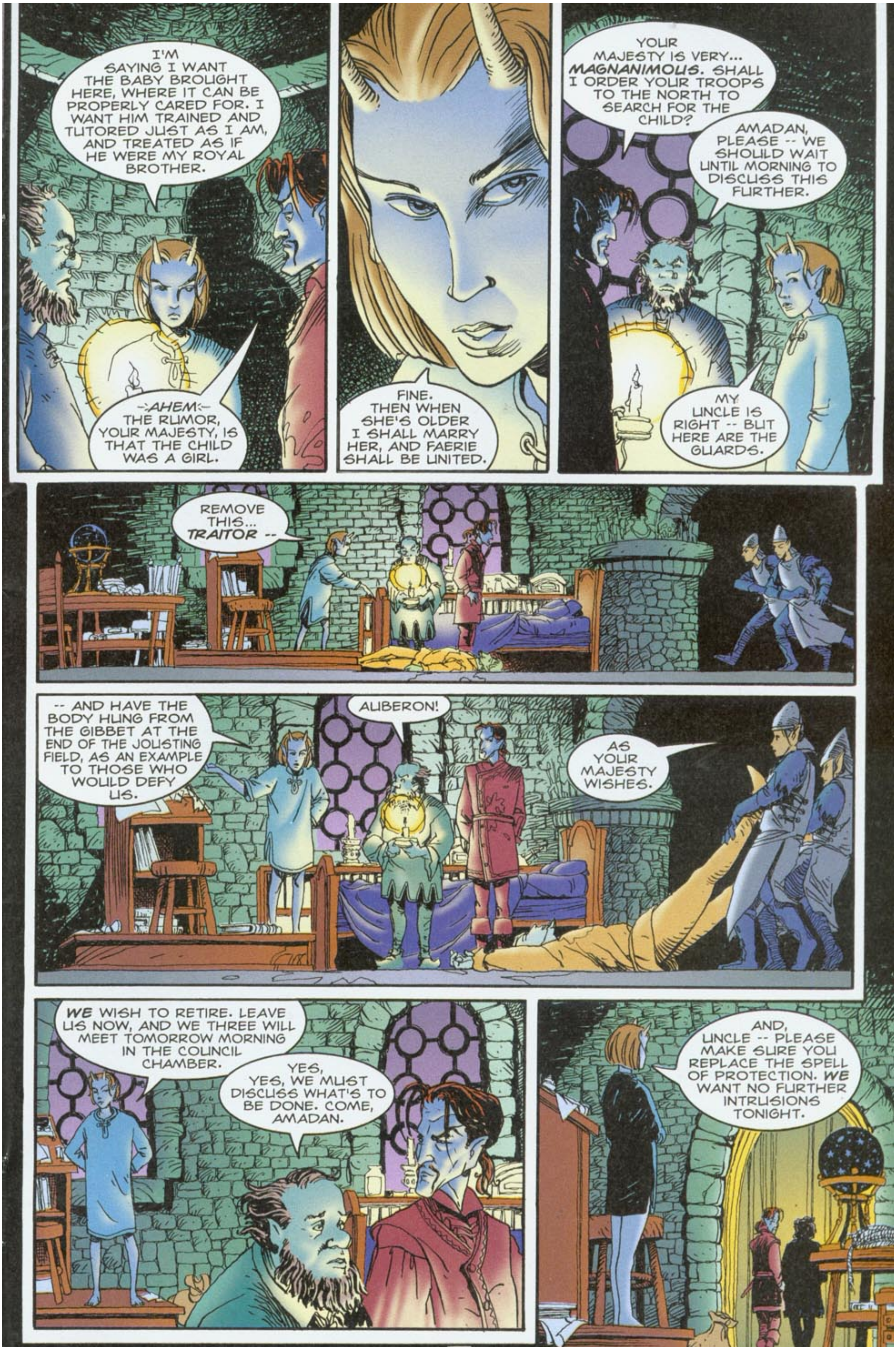

NOW, STURM, YE'VE BROUGHT ME THIS FAR AND I THANK YE FOR IT, BUT HERE'S WHERE I MUST GO ON ALONE.
Awww, YE'RE A WEE, SOFT THINGIE, GRETCHEN, AN' YOU MAY HAVE NEED OF ME IN THERE.
DON'T BE DAFT! YE'RE TRAVELING UNDER PENALTY OF DEATH, REMEMBER? THAT'S WHY YE'RE IN DISGUISE. BUT A POOR, HARMLESS BROWNIE MAY GO WHERE SHE PLEASES.
Awwrr, WULL, I WISH I COULD SEE 'IM AT THE NEWS OF 'IS DAUGHTER, THAT'S ALL. 'TIS THE GLADDEST NEWS THAT EVER WAS IN FAERIE!
WHAT HAPPY NEWS, THAT BRINGS A WORLD OF WOE!
Shush NOW, STURM, THE GUARD'LL HEAR US.
THERE BE NA' GUARDS -- THEY TRUST IN THEIR OWN MAGIC TO PROTECT 'EM.
ALL THE EASIER FOR ME TO GAIN ENTRY, THEN. NOW OFF TO THE NORTH YOU GO, AND I'LL MEET YOU AT IRON WELL WHEN MY TASK HERE IS DONE.

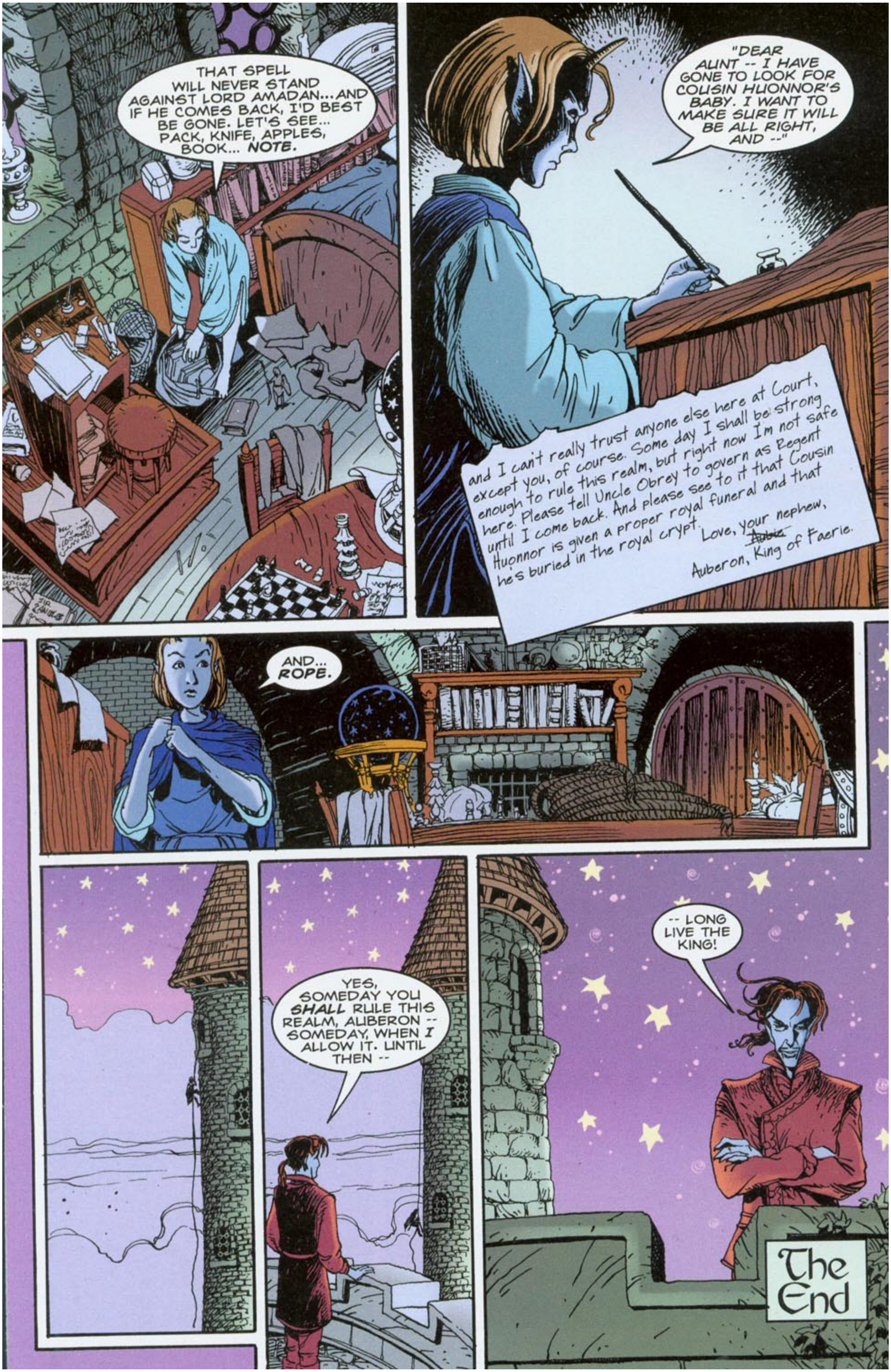

WHO'S THERE?
JUST A POOR, WEE BROWNIE SEEKING HOSPITALITY ON THIS DARK NIGHT.
Oh, A BROWNIE, ARE YOU? THERE'S A HOVEL FOR BROWNIES DOWN THERE BY THE STABLES -- GO SEEK YOUR HOSPITALITY THERE.
PLEASE, YOUR LORDSHIP, I HAVE NEWS FROM THE NORTH THAT I WOULD TRADE FOR A BIT OF FOOD AND A BED INDOORS.
WHAT NEWS?
IT CONCERNS THE LORD GRIMWAR--THE PRETENDER, AS SOME CALL HIM.
BE OFF WITH YOU, THEN! GRIMWAR HAS NO NEED OF NEWS --
-- NOW THAT HE'S DEAD.
AWWWWRRRRAAAAHH!
WHAT WAS THAT?!
SOME -- SOME WILD BEAST. THERE'S BEASTS ABOUT, SIR. WILL YOU NOT LET ME IN?
I'VE TOLD YOU WHERE TO GO. BE OFF WITH YOU, BROWNIE, BEFORE YOU COME TO HARM!


WHAT -- WHAT IS IT? UNCLE OBREY? WHAT TIME IS IT?
ALMOST THREE HOURS TILL SUNRISE. ARE YOU AWAKE, AUBERON? DO YOU HEAR WHAT I SAY? I HAVE NEWS OF OUR COUSIN OF GRIMWAR.
I'M AWAKE. WHAT IS IT?
I AM SORRY TO TELL YOU THAT HUONNOR, LORD GRIMWAR, OUR COUSIN AND LATE PRETENDER TO YOUR THRONE --
-- IS DEAD.
NO! *NO!* NO, UNCLE, YOU MUST BE *MISTAKEN!*
I'M AFRAID NOT. I'VE JUST COME FROM THE TOWER. I'VE SEEN THE BODY.
HE WAS MURDERED, STABBED -- AS HE SLEPT, IT APPEARS.
BUT -- COUSIN HUONNOR WAS **GOOD,** HE WAS A **GOOD** MAN! AND -- AND EVERYONE WILL THINK *I* DID IT, I MEAN, THAT **WE** ORDERED HIM KILLED!


WHO DID IT? WHO DID IT, UNCLE?
WE DON'T KNOW.
Oh, YES WE DO...
'TWAS LORD DUNNAN DID THE DEED.
JASPER!
I THOUGHT THERE WAS A SPELL OF PROTECTION HERE.
I'M SORRY, AUBERON -- I BROKE IT WHEN I CAME TO TELL YOU THIS NEWS.
WHAT'S IT MATTER TO YOUR YOUNG MAJESTY WHO KILLED HIM, ANYWAY? THE QUESTION YOU SHOULD BE ASKING IS -- WHY?
THE QUESTION IS, WHO GAVE THE ORDER, AND WHY DID THEY --
AUGHCKKK!
AMADAN!
WHAT LUCK! WHAT LUCK THAT I WAS IN TIME -- TO SAVE YOU FROM THIS MADMAN! IS YOUR MAJESTY UNHARMED?


YES, BUT -- LORD DUNNAN CLAIMS -- CLAIMED -- TO HAVE KILLED OUR COUSIN OF GRIMWAR. I THINK HE WOULD HAVE KILLED US, TOO.
I... JASPER... HE WAS MY *FRIEND*.
LET US HOPE YOUR FUTURE FRIENDS ARE LESS DANGEROUS.
AMADAN -- WHAT IS HAPPENING?
JUST BEFORE SUNSET A SPY ARRIVED, A RENEGADE ELF FROM THE NORTH. HE BROUGHT WORD THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN BORN TO LADY GRIMWAR.
THE PROPHECY!
YOU KNOW OF IT?!
WELL, YES, I -- I'M THE *KING*, I'M SUPPOSED TO KNOW THESE THINGS.
INDEED. THEN YOUR MAJESTY REALIZES THAT THE CHILD POSES A GRAVE THREAT TO YOU.
IT'S NOT A THREAT IF I WELCOME IT.
AUBERON! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?


I'M SAYING I WANT THE BABY BROUGHT HERE, WHERE IT CAN BE PROPERLY CARED FOR. I WANT HIM TRAINED AND TUTORED JUST AS I AM, AND TREATED AS IF HE WERE MY ROYAL BROTHER.
-:AHEM:- THE RUMOR, YOUR MAJESTY, IS THAT THE CHILD WAS A GIRL.
FINE. THEN WHEN SHE'S OLDER I SHALL MARRY HER, AND FAERIE SHALL BE UNITED.
YOUR MAJESTY IS VERY... *MAGNANIMOUS.* SHALL I ORDER YOUR TROOPS TO THE NORTH TO SEARCH FOR THE CHILD?
AMADAN, PLEASE -- WE SHOULD WAIT UNTIL MORNING TO DISCUSS THIS FURTHER.
MY UNCLE IS RIGHT -- BUT HERE ARE THE GUARDS.
REMOVE THIS... *TRAITOR* --
-- AND HAVE THE BODY HUNG FROM THE GIBBET AT THE END OF THE JOUSTING FIELD, AS AN EXAMPLE TO THOSE WHO WOULD DEFY US.
AUBERON!
AS YOUR MAJESTY WISHES.
WE WISH TO RETIRE. LEAVE US NOW, AND WE THREE WILL MEET TOMORROW MORNING IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.
YES, YES, WE MUST DISCUSS WHAT'S TO BE DONE. COME, AMADAN.
AND, UNCLE -- PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU REPLACE THE SPELL OF PROTECTION. *WE* WANT NO FURTHER INTRUSIONS TONIGHT.


THAT SPELL WILL NEVER STAND AGAINST LORD AMADAN... AND IF HE COMES BACK, I'D BEST BE GONE. LET'S SEE... PACK, KNIFE, APPLES, BOOK... *NOTE.*
"DEAR AUNT -- I HAVE GONE TO LOOK FOR COUSIN HUONNOR'S BABY. I WANT TO MAKE SURE IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT, AND --"

and I can't really trust anyone else here at Court, except you, of course. Some day I shall be strong enough to rule this realm, but right now I'm not safe here. Please tell Uncle Obrey to govern as Regent until I come back. And please see to it that Cousin Huonnor is given a proper royal funeral and that he's buried in the royal crypt.

Love, your nephew,
~~Aubie~~
Auberon, King of Faerie.

AND... *ROPE.*
YES, SOMEDAY YOU *SHALL* RULE THIS REALM, AUBERON -- SOMEDAY, WHEN *I* ALLOW IT. UNTIL THEN --
-- LONG LIVE THE KING!
The End